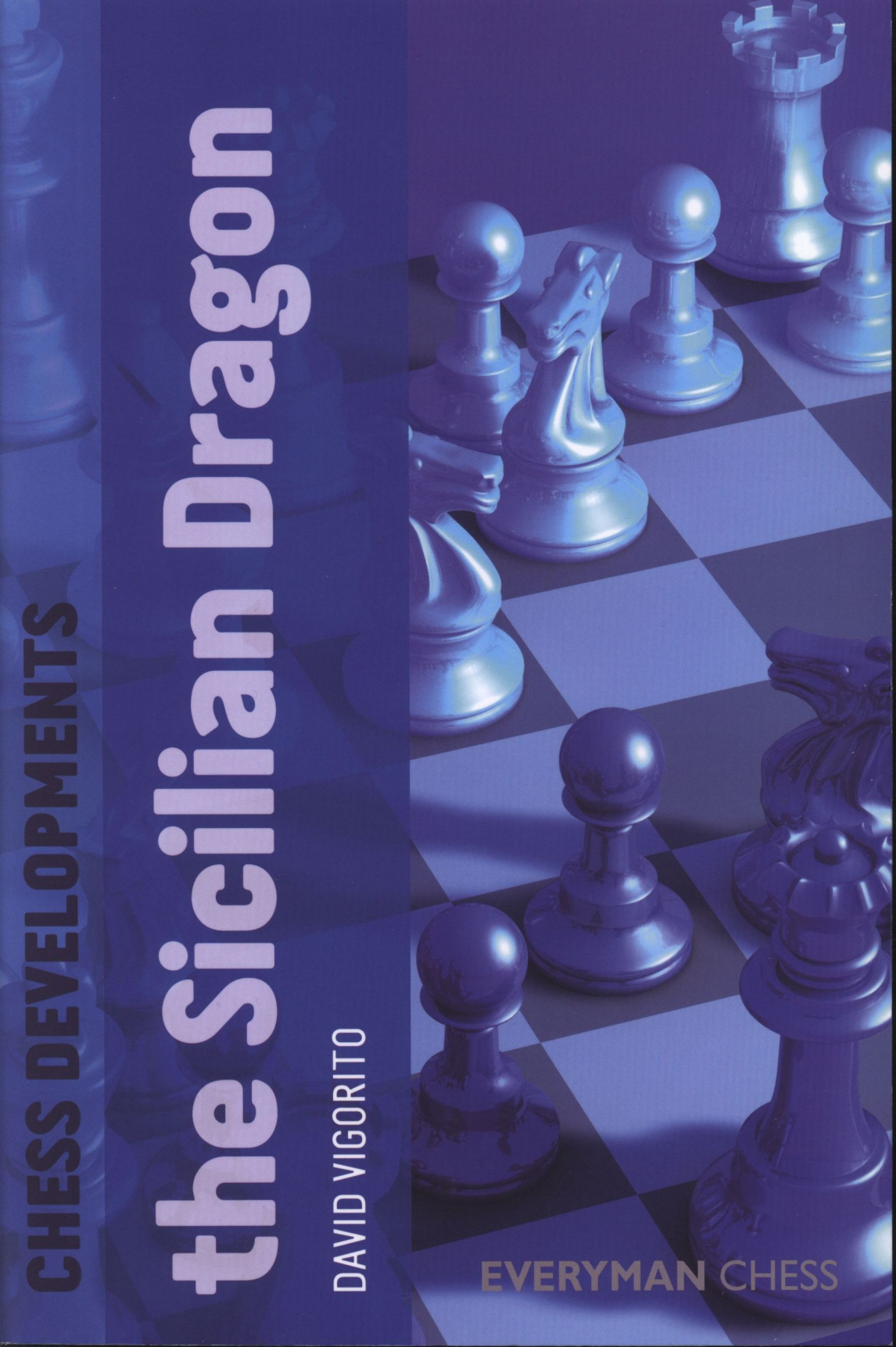


**CHESS DEVELOPMENTS**

# the Sicilian Dragon

DAVID VIGORITO

**EVERYMAN CHESS**





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[www.everymanchess.com](http://www.everymanchess.com)

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*For Heather and Zoe*

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# Introduction

The Sicilian Dragon was one of my early loves. I still think it is a great opening to learn from because there are so many thematic tactical and positional ideas. It is an opening that is ripe with exchange sacrifices and opposite side castling attacks. The Dragon is an opening where one can learn about the dynamic balance between the initiative and material; attack and counterattack; and pawn structure and piece play. It is also a fun opening to analyse at home, and I have always kept an interest in the Dragon even long after I stopped playing it regularly.

I first started playing the Dragon in its Accelerated version (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6), which is safer than the pure Dragon (1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6) as covered in this book. The Accelerated allows the Maroczy Bind (5 c4), but Black is able to avoid certain lines of the Yugoslav Attack by using this move order. Eventually I moved to the Dragon and entered the fascinating world of the Yugoslav Attack. One of the positive aspects of the Dragon is also negative in a way – it is a very narrow opening. The only critical lines are those in the Yugoslav Attack. Black has to be very well prepared for both 9 Bc4 and 9 O-O-O (and to a lesser degree 9 g4), but other than that Black has a relatively easy life. Because there are only a couple of critical ways for White to play, Black can prepare more deeply, but there is also less variety in the opening.

The Dragon introduced me to the world of 2...d6 Sicilians and after while I switched to the more ‘mature’ Najdorf, which has always been more popular at higher levels. In recent years, however, the Dragon has made quite a comeback. Carlsen and Radjabov have used it regularly, while players such as Ivanchuk, Kasimdzhanov, Grischuk, Shirov, Nakamura and Gashimov have all been found on the black side.

This book is broken up into two main parts. The first part covers the Yugoslav Attack with 9 Bc4. This has always been considered the sharpest way for White to play, but Black has a relatively broad choice of responses. The five chapters cover the Soltis Variation, which could be considered the backbone of the 9 Bc4 Dragon

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for Black, as well as some modern lines for both sides. I do not cover 12 h4 Nc4, which I have always found to be a bit passive. This system is very rarely played nowadays. Originally I had wanted to include the old line with ...Qa5. This approach was recommended by Chris Ward in his pioneering works *Winning with the Dragon* and *Winning with the Sicilian Dragon 2*. These books influenced me and countless others. Unfortunately, this line has fallen on hard times and I was unable to find anything to change theory's current opinion of these lines as inadequate. I have also omitted minor lines for Black.

The second part of the book covers 9 0-0-0, which I consider to be the most annoying move to meet, as well as the related but less dangerous move 9 g4. Black should really meet 9 0-0-0 with 9...d5, but I have also covered the risky alternatives 9...Nxd4 and 9...Bd7. Perhaps the biggest development in the Dragon over the last couple of decades has been the realization that after 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4, the near-universal 12...e5 appears to be inadequate. Black has survived with the once rare moves 12...Bxd4 and 12...Nxc3, although it must be said that in many cases he is just playing to equalize and make a draw in these lines. Black's success with these moves caused White to look for fresh approaches and thus the variations 10 Qe1 and 10 Kb1 were born.

By now the reader may have gathered that lines outside of the Yugoslav Attack are not covered in this book. Practice has shown that lines such as the Classical, Fianchetto, and Levenfish are less dangerous for Black. Therefore they are played much less frequently at a high level and develop at a slower pace. Existing Dragon literature covers these various lines quite well and I did not have anything special to add to them, so I decided to focus on the lines that are really the most dangerous for Black. I will highlight the 'developments' in the Dragon while also trying to explain how they have come about, as opening theory is evolutionary. I tried to write this book with an objective eye, but I will admit that I have some sympathy for the Black cause.

As always I have several people to thank: first and foremost my wife Heather, for, well, everything; both of our mothers, for watching Zoe the baby so that I could work; John Emms, for his help with the format and his patience with my never-ending promises of meeting extended deadlines; Joe Fang, for the use of his library, his proof-reading, and for blitz games in 1994; and Dennis Monokroussos and Roland Loetscher for sharing their secret analysis.

David Vigorito, Somerville, Massachusetts,  
October 2011



# Part I

## 9 Bc4

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 (Diagram 1)

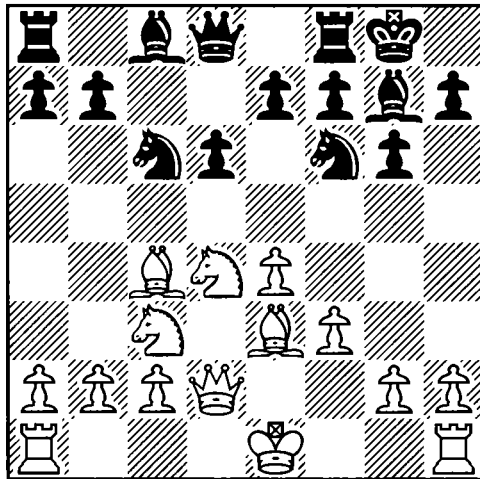


Diagram 1 (B)

This is White's sharpest way of handling the Dragon. He prevents Black's ...d5 break while preparing to castle long and launch an attack on the black king.

9...Bd7

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

Now White has three different moves that he can play. All may well lead to the same position, but there are some differences. The main move is 10 O-O-O. After 10...Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 White has traditionally played 12 h4. Black's most reliable defence is 12...h5, which is the Soltis Variation. This is covered in Chapter 1 and is by far the largest chapter in the book. This is a wonderfully complex system and Black's results have been relatively good over the years. In the mid-1990's white players found a new weapon to combat the Soltis Variation – they avoided it. The Modern Variation (12 Kb1!) came to the forefront of Dragon theory and even now Black has some problems with this move. While it had always been accepted that playing Kb1 was a useful move for White, the strength of playing it so early was not fully appreciated.

So, Black was compelled to seek new roads against 9 Bc4. There are two relatively young variations that have become very popular. The first of these systems is the Topalov Variation with 11...Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5. Just as White avoided the Soltis Variation by deviating a move early with 12 Kb1, Black passes on the traditional 11...Ne5 and exchanges knights instead. The second line is the Chinese Variation with 10...Rb8. Here Black goes a step further and does not even bring his rook to the half-open c-file. This system is quite popular and has been played at a very high level.

The 'one-upmanship' continued and White can in fact deviate on move 10 himself. It used to be quite common for White to play 10 h4 before castling. The possibility of White attacking on the h-file without castling discouraged Black from certain obscure variations. Nowadays this move is considered to limit White's options as much as Black's. Although the Chinese Variation does not work so well against White's early advance, White can no longer play the Modern Variation with 12 Kb1 and therefore the simplest way to meet 10 h4 is with 10...Rc8 11 Bb3 h5! heading for the Soltis Variation.

White sometimes plays 10 Bb3 immediately. This used to be considered inaccurate (and perhaps it is), but White manages to avoid the Chinese Variation while retaining the option of playing the Modern Variation. However, Black can play a kind of 'Accelerated Topalov' with 10...Nxd4 11 Bxd5 b5. This line can also arise from the Accelerated Dragon and for that reason this particular system has not had much coverage in either Dragon or Accelerated Dragon literature – it seems that Dragon books consider it more likely to arise from an Accelerated Dragon (which is probably true), while Accelerated Dragon books say that it transposes to the Dragon proper (which is also true!) and thus nobody wants to look at it. In any case, it has its own *developing body of theory which will be examined in Chapter 5.*

# Chapter One

## Soltis Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 (Diagram 1)

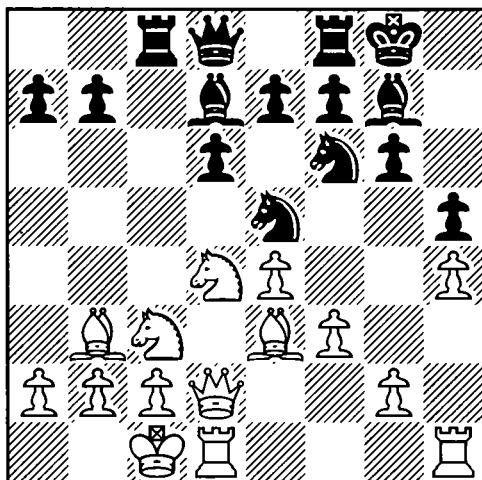


Diagram 1 (W)

This is the starting point for the Soltis Variation, which has been considered a sound and ambitious system for Black for many years. It was this variation that Kasparov

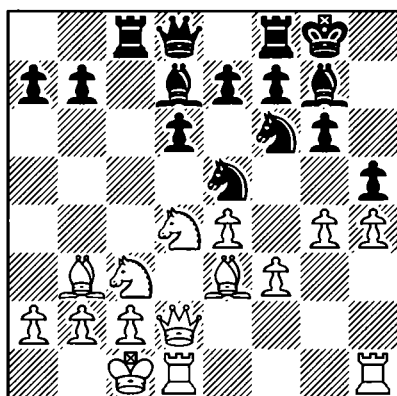
## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

turned to in his 1995 World Championship match with Anand. In order to break through on the kingside, White will have to play g4 at some point and this will almost always involve the sacrifice of at least a pawn. Here Black not only has chances to win with a counterattack; often he can take material and live to tell the tale.

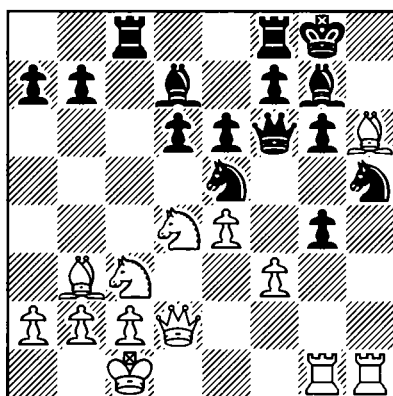
Nowadays 13 Bg5! is considered to be the strongest move and in fact this continuation is more popular than all other thirteenth moves combined. The consequences of this move will be examined in Games 4-11, but first we will look at White's other 13th moves in Games 1-3. These lines are not as critical, but they are still seen in practice and having some insight into these lines will help to understand some of the finer points in other positions, especially those of Chapter 2.

### **Game 1** **V.Tregubov-A.Kislinsky** **Alushta 2009**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 g4 (Diagram 2)**



**Diagram 2 (B)**



**Diagram 3 (W)**

This is the most direct attacking move. If this continuation was good then the Soltis Variation would not have much right to exist.

**13...hxg4 14 h5 Nxh5 15 Bh6**

When White is trying to tear through the kingside in such a violent manner, there will often be a decision between playing Bh6 or Rdg1. Sometimes these moves can

amount to the same thing if both are played, but there are usually some differences. In this case, the text move is by far the most popular. Instead 15 Rdg1 Qa5 (Black was also successful with 15...Rxc3!? 16 bxc3 Qc7 in N.Getz-J.Hammer, Reykjavik 2011) and now:

a) 16 Rxh5?! gxh5 17 Bh6 Nd3+! gave Black a winning position in K.Korley-B.Smith, Philadelphia 2009.

b) 16 Bh6 is a better try, although after 16...Rxc3! 17 bxc3 Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Qxc3 19 Kb1 Qxd4 20 fxg4 Bxg4 21 Rxg4 Nxg4 22 Qxg6+ Qg7 23 Qxh5, as in A.Dimitrijevic-A.Brkcic, Maribor 2003, I doubt White has enough for the pawns after 23...Ne5!?

### 15...e6

This move blocks the diagonal of the b3-bishop, covers the d5-square, and allows Black's queen to come to the king's defence.

### 16 Rdg1 Qf6 (Diagram 3)

We will see a similar position in Chapter 2, but with the moves Kb1 and ...Re8 thrown in. The difference may seem minor, but it actually drastically affects the assessment of the position.



**NOTE:** In tactical positions even the slightest difference between similar variations can have decisive consequences. Here one disadvantage to having the king on c1 can be seen in the variation 17 fxg4? Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Qf4+! exchanging queens.

### 17 Bxg7 Qxg7 18 fxg4 Nf6 (Diagram 4)

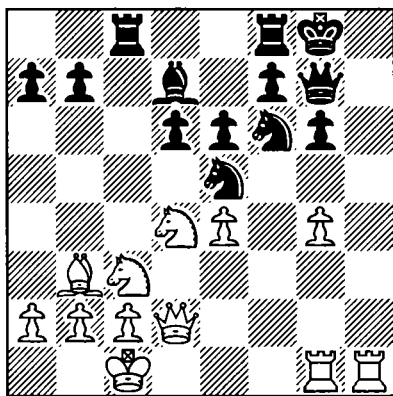


Diagram 4 (W)

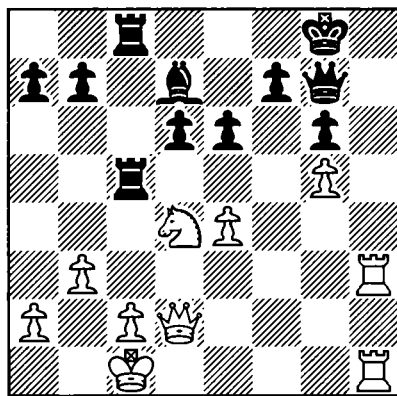


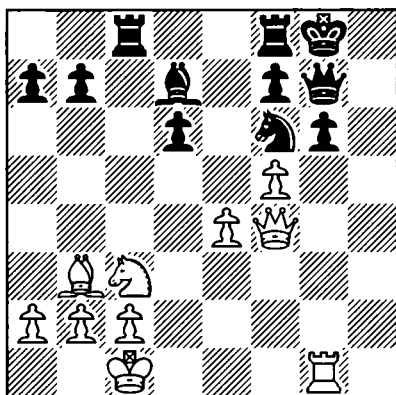
Diagram 5 (B)

### 19 Nf5?

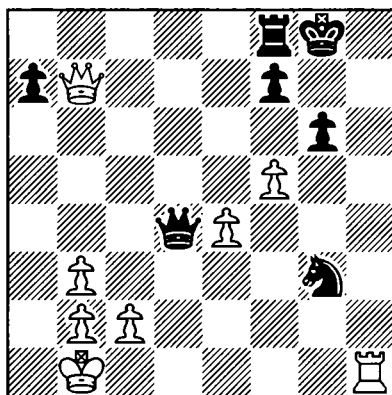
This does not work, but it is difficult for White to find a good way to attack. If he plays along the lines of the analogous variations in Chapter 2 with 19 g5 Nh5 20 Nce2 Nc4 things work out differently: 21 Bxc4 (following the recipe from Game 14; instead 21 Qb4 a5 22 Qxb7 Ne5 23 c3 Nd3+ 24 Kb1 Nc5 25 Qb6 Qe5 26 Bc2? Rb8 27 Qxa5 Rxb2+ 28 Kxb2 Nd3+ 0-1 was the well-known game L.Ljubojevic-A.Miles, Brussels 1986) 21...Rxc4 22 b3 (otherwise Ng3 is not possible) 22...Rc5 23 Ng3 Nxg3 24 Rxg3 Rfc8 25 Rgh3 (**Diagram 5**).

Now we have the same position as is reached in Game 14, but here Kb1 has not been played (Black's position is the same, as he has played ...Rfc8 in one move instead of ...Re8 followed by ...Rec8). There is a slight difference now: 25...Rxc2+ 26 Nxc2 (or 26 Qxc2 Qxd4) 26...Qa1 mate!

**19...exf5 20 gxf5 Nf3 21 Qf4 Nxg1 22 Rxg1 (Diagram 6)**



**Diagram 6 (B)**



**Diagram 7 (W)**

The threat of Rxg6 looks difficult to meet, but in fact it is easily deterred by Black's next move.

**22...Kh8!**

It is unusual to avoid an attack by moving the king to an open file!

**23 Rh1+ Nh5 24 Nd5 Be6! 25 Ne7 Bxb3 26 axb3 Rce8 27 Qxd6 Rxe7?!**

Black was no doubt trying to choose the most practical route, but 27...Rd8 was probably stronger.

**28 Qxe7 Kg8 29 Qxb7 Qd4?!**

*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

Better was 29...Ng3 30 Rd1 gxf5 31 exf5 Qg4.

**30 Kb1?**

White should go into the ending with 30 fxg6 fxg6 31 Qd5+.

**30...Ng3 (Diagram 7) 31 Rh3**

If 31 Re1 Qd2.

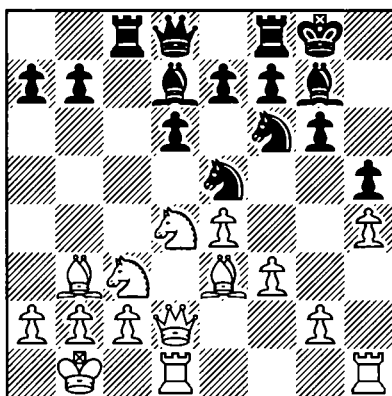
**31...Qxe4 32 Qc7 Nxf5 33 Qh2 Qd4 34 c3 Qf6 0-1**

### *Game 2*

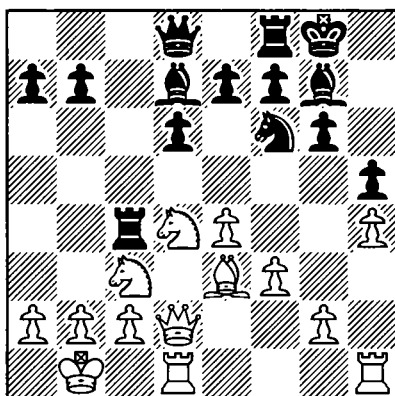
**G.Todorovic-N.Ristic**

**Vrnjacka Banja 2010**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Kb1 (Diagram 8)**



**Diagram 8 (B)**



**Diagram 9 (W)**

There is a strong trend for White to play an early Kb1, and with good reason. Here is it not so dangerous, however, but this continuation could appeal to positionally minded players.

**13...Nc4**

Instead 13...Re8 transposes to Games 13 and 14, but Black faces more problems in those lines.

**14 Bxc4 Rxc4 (Diagram 9) 15 b3!?**



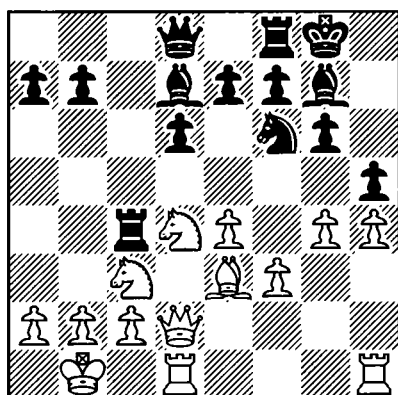
**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** It took a long time for white players to realize that this move did not necessarily create tragic weaknesses. Forcing the rook to determine its position can be quite useful for White and we will see this move crop up again.

Of the alternatives, only 'c' looks dangerous:

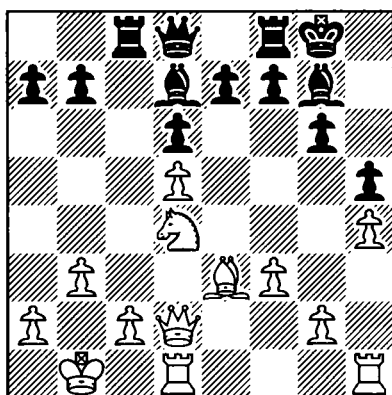
a) 15 Nb3 Qc7 16 Bd4 Bc6! has long been known to be satisfactory for Black.

b) 15 Nde2 b5 16 Bh6 Qa5 (16...b4 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Nd5 Nxd5 19 exd5 Qb6 is also possible) 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Nf4 Rfc8 19 Ncd5 Qxd2 20 Rxd2 Nxd5 21 Nxd5 Kf8 was level in the famous game V.Anand-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 11), New York 1995. The Indian Grandmaster spurned a draw and lost quickly.

c) 15 g4!? (**Diagram 10**) is a move we can expect to see more of in the future. After 15...hxg4 16 h5 Nxh5 White has:



**Diagram 10 (B)**



**Diagram 11 (B)**

c1) 17 fxg4 Bxg4 18 Rdg1 e5!? 19 Ndb5 (Jones suggests 19 Nf5!? gxf5 20 exf5 with compensation for the piece and he then suggests the prudent 20...Bxf5 21 Rxf5 Bg6) 19...Bf3! 20 Qd3 Rxc3 21 Nxc3 Bxh1 22 Rxh1 a6!? and White did not have enough for the pawns in K.Piorun-R.Robson, Chennai 2011.

c2) 17 Rdg1!? Qc8 (perhaps Black should try 17...Nf6) 18 Nd5 Re8 19 fxg4 Bxg4 and now:

c21) 20 Rh4 e6! 21 Nb5? (21 Nc3) 21...exd5 22 Nxd6 Qd8 23 Nxe8 Qxh4 24 Bg5 Qh3 25 Qxd5 Qh2 26 Rc1 Qe5 27 Nxg7 Qxd5 0-1 was R.Garcia Pantoja-H.Delgado Ramos, Havana 2010.



c22) Again 20 b3! is surprisingly effective. Here Jones gives 20...e6 21 Rxc4 exd5 22 Rgg1 Nf6 23 bxc4 Nxe4 24 Qd3 dxc4 25 Qa3 Qc5 26 Qxc5 Nc3+ 27 Ka1 dxc5 28 Nf5 Be5 with a complicated position where Black has four pawns for a rook.

### **15...Rc8**

A typical trap is 15...Rc5? 16 Ne6! winning material: for example, 16...fxe6 (16...Bxe6 17 Bxc5) 17 Bxc5 dxc5 18 e5.

### **16 Nd5**

Instead 16 Nde2 b5 17 Bd4 Bc6 18 Nd5 Bxd5 19 exd5 Qc7 20 Rhe1 Kh7?! 21 g4! hxg4 22 fxg4 Ne4 23 Qd3 Bxd4 24 Qxe4! Be5 25 h5 gave White a strong attack in L.Milman-T.Daly, Philadelphia 2011. Black can avoid all of this with 17...e6 as pointed out by Dearing, while 17...e5!? 18 Be3 b4 19 Nd5 Nxd5 20 Qxd5 Rc6 looks promising as well.

### **16...Nxd5 17 exd5 (Diagram 11) 17...Qc7**

Again Black must avoid 17...Rc5? 18 Ne6!, while 17...b5 18 g4! Rc5 19 Ne6! Rxd5 20 Nxd8 Rxd2 21 Rxd2 hxg4 22 Nxf7! (22 Nb7 Bc6 gave Black decent counterplay in J.Murey-J.Mestel, Hastings 1982/83) 22...Rxf7 23 fxg4 Bxg4 24 Bxa7 would leave White up the exchange.

### **18 Bh6!**

White exchanges off the Dragon bishop. This is much better than the weakening 18 c4? b5! 19 cxb5 Qb7 20 Bh6 Qxd5 when Black had the upper hand in J.Murey-S.Kudrin, Beersheba 1984.



**TIP: When your opponent has the bishop pair, very often it is a good plan to exchange bishops, as bishops work better as a team. Here White's knight is just as strong as Black's remaining bishop. Exchanging off the Dragon bishop also weakens Black's kingside and makes the weaknesses created by 15 b3 inconsequential.**

### **18...Qc3**

It would be dangerous to invite the white queen in with 18...Bxh6 19 Qxh6: for example, 19...Qc5 20 g4! with the idea 20...Qxd5 21 Nf5 Qe5 22 Rhe1.

### **19 Bxg7 Qxd2 20 Rxd2 Kxg7 21 Re1 (Diagram 12)**

Black should not really have much trouble in this ending, but White has a little more space so Black should not play too passively.

### **21...Rfe8 22 c4 a6 23 Kb2**

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White could try to discourage Black from breaking on the queenside: for example, 23 a4 b5 24 cxb5 axb5 25 a5 (25 axb5?! Rc5) 25...Rc5 26 Nc2 Bf5 27 Kb2 Bxc2 28 Rxc2 Rxd5 29 Rc7 when has White some initiative for the pawn.

### **23...Rc5**

Both here and on the next couple of moves Black should certainly consider playing ...b5.

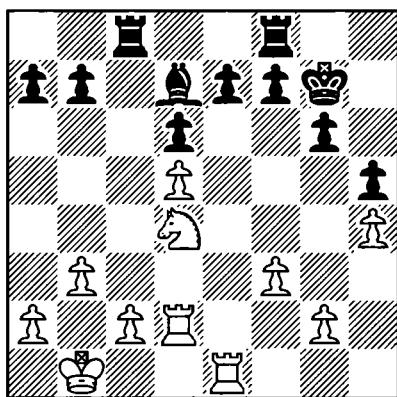
### **24 a4 Kf6 25 Re4 Rb8 26 g4**

A better move order would be 26 Rde2 Re8 27 g4.

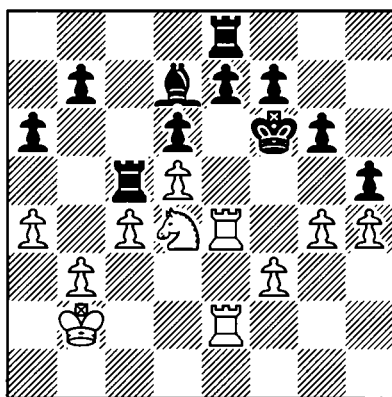
### **26...Re8**

And here Black would be better off defending with 26...e5 27 dxe6 fxe6 28 g5+ Ke7 when he is much better placed than he is in the game.

### **27 Rde2 (Diagram 13)**



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (B)**

Black has played much too passively and now White threatens 28 g5+ winning the e7-pawn.

### **27...e5**

Opening the position further with 27...hxg4 can hardly help Black. After 28 fxg4 e5 29 dxe6 fxe6 30 g5+ Kf7 31 Rf4+ Kg7 32 Rf6 White has a huge advantage.

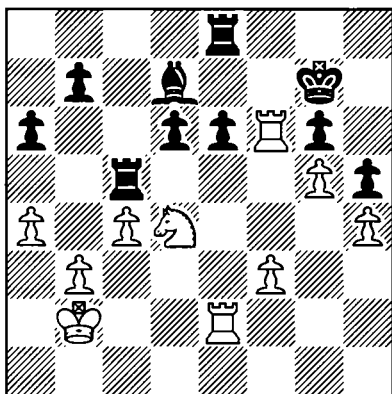
### **28 dxe6 fxe6 29 g5+ Kf7**

Black cannot play 29...Kg7 because of 30 Nxe6+.

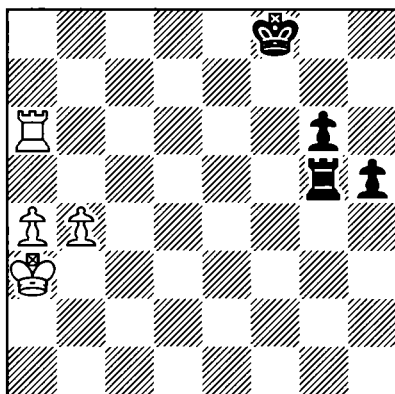
### **30 Rf4+ Kg7 31 Rf6 (Diagram 14)**

*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

Black is condemned to a miserable defence and it is not surprising that he is unable to hold the position.



**Diagram 14 (B)**



**Diagram 15 (B)**

**31...Re5 32 Rxe5 dxe5 33 Ne2 Bc6 34 Nc3 Rd8 35 Rxe6 Rd2+ 36 Ka3 Bxf3 37 Rxe5 Rh2 38 Nd5?!**

Better was 38 Re7+ Kf8 39 Re6! Kg7 40 Rf6 Bc6 41 Rf4.

**38...Rxf4 39 Re7+ Kf8 40 Rxb7 Bxd5**

Delaying this exchange with 40...Rg4 looks preferable.

**41 cxd5 Rd4 42 Ra7 Rxd5 43 Rxa6 Rxf5 44 b4 (Diagram 15) 44...Rg3+?!**

This loses quickly. A better try was 44...h4, with the possible line 45 b5 Ke7 46 Ra7+ Kd8 47 b6 Kc8 48 a5 h3 49 a6 Kb8 50 Kb4 Rh5 (if 50...h2 51 Rg7) 51 Rb7+ Ka8 (51...Kc8 52 Rc7+ Kd8 53 a7 mates) 52 Rc7 Rh8 53 Kb5 h2 54 b7+ Ka7 55 Rc8 Rxc8 56 bxc8Q h1Q.

**45 Kb2 Ke7 46 b5 h4 47 b6 Rg2+ 48 Kc3 Rg1 49 a5 Rb1 50 Ra7+ Kd6 1-0**

White is faster after 51 Rh7 g5 52 b7.

### *Game 3* **H.Koch-R.Dahlstroem** Correspondence 2007

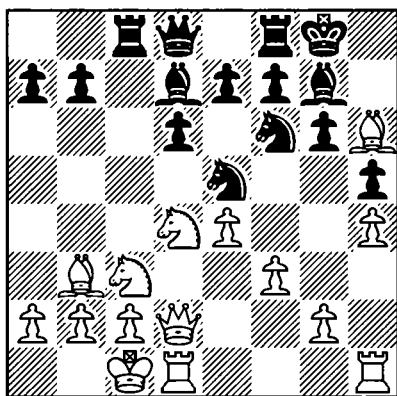
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bh6 (Diagram 16)**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

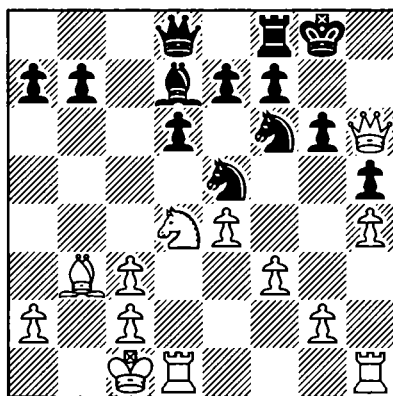
This direct continuation used to be very popular before the more sophisticated 13 Bg5 became the main move.

### 13...Nc4

This is more solid than 13...Bxh6 14 Qxh6 Rxc3 15 bxc3 (**Diagram 17**) which used to be the main line.



**Diagram 16 (B)**



**Diagram 17 (B)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Black's play is very thematic, but it is White's resources that have been strengthened over the years. 13...Nc4 may seem less exciting, but it is considered to be much more reliable.

Here Black has three major continuations:

- a) 15...Qa5 16 Kb1 (worse is 16 g4?! Qxc3 17 Kb1 a5 when Black has done well) 16...Rc8 (16...Qxc3 17 Ne2! intends g2-g4 or Nf4-d5) 17 g4 and now:
  - a1) 17...Nc4 18 Rd3! Qa3 (Black is worse after 18...hxg4 19 h5 g5 20 Nf5 Bxf5 21 Qxg5+ Kh7 22 Qxf5+ Qxf5 23 exf5, but 18...b5!? could be tried) 19 Bxc4 Rxc4 20 e5! dxe5 21 Ne6! wins for White.
  - a2) 17...Qxc3 18 gxh5 Nc4 19 Bxc4 Rxc4 20 Rd3 Qb4+ (similar is 20...Qa5 21 Nb3 Qxh5 22 Qxh5 Nxh5) 21 Nb3 (21 Rb3, as in A.Kovacevic-N.Ristic, Vrnjacka Banja 2005, also seems promising) 21...Nxh5 22 Rg1! Qb6 23 Rg2! Bh3 24 Rgd2 Be6 25 Qe3 and now 25...Qxe3 26 Rxe3 is at least a little better for White, but 25...Qb5!? is an alternative.
- b) 15...Qc7 16 Kb1 a5 (White has also scored well after 16...Rc8 17 g4 a5 18 Nf5!

*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

Bxf5 19 exf5!) 17 f4! and now:

b1) 17...Nc4 18 f5 is very good for White. A recent example: 18...a4 19 Bxc4 Qxc4 20 fxg6 Rc8 21 Rhf1 fxg6 22 Qxg6+ Kf8 23 e5 dxe5 24 Rxf6+ exf6 25 Qxf6+ Qf7 26 Qh8+ Ke7 27 Qxe5+ Kf8 28 Qh8+ Qg8 29 Rf1+ 1-0 Lu Yijie-E.Kanter, Moscow 2011.

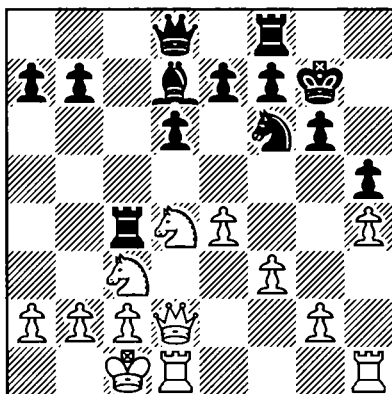
b2) 17...Nfg4 18 Qg5 a4 19 fxe5 axb3 20 cxb3 Nf2 21 e6! gives White the upper hand after 21...Nxe4 22 Qh6 Nxc3+ 23 Kb2 Nxd1+ 24 Rxd1 as shown in many games.

c) 15...Qc8 is considered best, as compared to variation 'b2' Black is overprotecting the e6-square. Still, this looks insufficient after 16 Kb1 a5 17 f4! Nfg4 18 Qg5 a4 19 fxe5 axb3 and now:

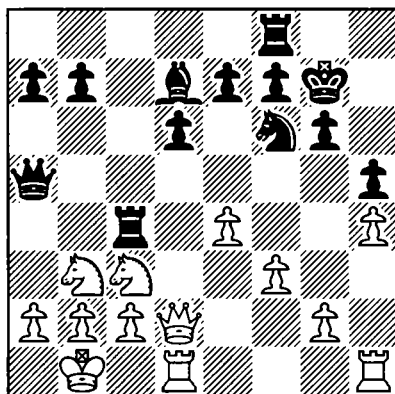
c1) 20 axb3 is rare but interesting. Jones gives 20...Nf2 21 Kb2 Qc5 22 Qxe7 Nxh1 23 Qxd7 Nf2 24 Rf1 Nxe4 25 Nb5 dxe5 26 Qxb7 when White a pawn up. I think Black should play 26...Ng3 when the e-pawn gives him counterplay.

c2) 20 cxb3 Nf2 21 Kb2 (the untried 21 c4 and especially 21 Kc2 look promising) 21...dxe5 22 Qxe5 Bg4 23 Nf3 Rd8 24 Kc2 (White loses a tempo compared to 21 Kc2) 24...Nxh1 25 Rxh1 Qa8 26 a4 b5! gave Black good counterplay in Y.Gutierrez Delgado-H.Delgado Ramos, Havana 2009.

**14 Bxc4 Rxc4 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 (Diagram 18)**



**Diagram 18 (W)**



**Diagram 19 (B)**

**16 g4**

This is the most aggressive plan. White can also play along the lines of the previous game with the quiet 16 Kb1 Qa5 17 Nb3 (**Diagram 19**).

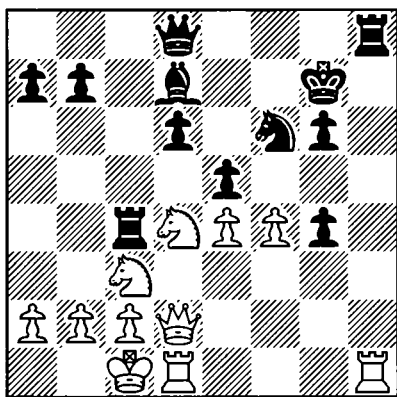
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Now almost any queen move is reasonable. Black has tried 17...Qb6 and even 17...Qb4, but in practice two moves have been played quite frequently:

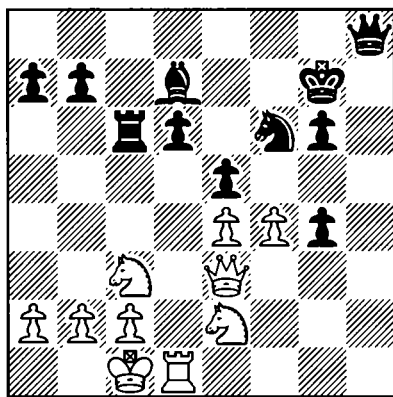
a) 17...Qc7 18 g4 Rxc3!? (Black has also tried the risky 18...hxg4 19 h5) 19 bxc3 hxg4 20 h5 Rc8 (20...gxf3 21 hxg6 fxg6 is also quite playable) 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 Qh6+ Kf7 23 Rd3 Qb6?! (23...Qc4!?) 24 fxg4 Bxg4 25 Qf4 Bh5 26 e5! and Black's position rapidly fell apart in D.Stets-N.Brunner, Chambery 2007.

b) 17...Qe5!? is an unusual idea: 18 f4 (18 Rhe1 Qg3! gave Black counterplay in V.Kotronias-B.Alterman, Rishon Le Zion 1996) 18...Qe6 19 Nd4 Qg4 20 e5 dxe5 21 fxe5 Ne4 22 Nxe4 Qxe4 23 Rhe1 Qg4 with chances for both sides in Y.Lu-Y.Wan, Lishui 2009.

**16...hxg6 17 h5 Rh8 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 f4 e5! (Diagram 20)**



**Diagram 20 (W)**



**Diagram 21 (B)**

This central strike has long been known to give Black sufficient counterchances.

### **20 Rxh8**

With this move White tries to displace one of Black's pieces. The alternatives are more popular, but Black has little to fear:

a) 20 fxe5 dxe5 21 Nde2 (21 Ne6+ Bxe6 22 Qxd8 Rxd8 23 Rxd8 Nxe4 24 Nxe4 Rxe4 is fine for Black) 21...Rh3! is good for Black, as shown in many games.

b) 20 Nde2 Rxh1 21 Rxh1 Nxe4 22 Nxe4 Rxe4 23 fxe5 Rxe2! (instead 23...Rxe5 24 Qh6+ Kf7 25 Qh7+ Kf6 26 Rf1+ Kg5 27 Nf4 gives White a strong attack) 24 Qxe2 (or 24 Qh6+ Kf7 25 Qf4+ Kg7 26 Qh6+ with perpetual check) 24...Qg5+ 25 Kb1 (the endgame that arises after 25 Qd2 Qxd2+ 26 Kxd2 dxe5 is equal, as shown in sev-

*Soltis Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

eral correspondence games) 25...Qxe5 26 Qd2 Bc6 gives Black sufficient compensation for the exchange.

**20...Qxh8 21 Nde2**

Black is doing well after 21 Nb3 Qf8! 22 fxe5 (Black is clearly better after 22 Qxd6?! Qxd6 23 Rxd6 Bc6) 22...dxe5.

**21...Rc6 22 Qe3 (Diagram 21) 22...b6**

Black could also consider 22...Qh6 23 Kb1 b6 24 Qg3 Qh5!?

**23 Nd5?!**

A better try is 23 fxe5 dxe5 24 Nd5, although Black has decent counterplay after 24...Be8.

**23...Qh3! 24 Ng3 Nxe4!**

Black sacrifices a piece to exchange queens. His kingside pawns will be dangerous in the endgame.

**25 Nxe4 Qxe3+ 26 Nxe3 exf4 27 Nd5 Bf5**

Black will quickly win back the piece and head into a pawn-up rook ending.

**28 Rd4 f3 29 Ne3 Bxe4 30 Rxe4 g3 31 Rg4 g2 32 Nxb2 fxg2 33 Rxb2 d5 34 Kd2 Rf6 35 Rg3 Rf2+ 36 Kd3 Kf6 37 Rh3 g5 0-1**

In a correspondence game the win is ensured, so White threw in the towel.

*Game 4*  
**A.Brkic-Z.Babic**  
Bizovac 2007

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5! (Diagram 22)**

Experience has shown that this is really the only dangerous move.

**13...Rc5!**

This idea of Sosonko has been considered the only adequate reply for over three decades.

**14 g4**

Instead 14 Kb1 is covered in Games 7-11, while other moves are less threatening theoretically:

a) 14 Rhe1 b5 and now:

a1) 15 Kb1 (this position could also arise via 14 Kb1 b5 15 Rhe1) 15...a5 16 f4 Nc4

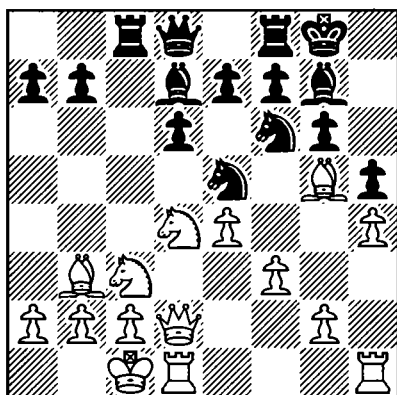
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

17 Bxc4 Rxc4 18 e5 (White should avoid 18 Ndx5?! Bxb5 19 Nxb5 Qb6 20 Nd4 Ng4 when Black has the initiative) 18...b4! 19 Ncb5 (Black has good compensation for the exchange after both 19 Qd3 Rxc3 20 bxc3 Nd5 and 19 exf6 exf6 20 Qd3 Rxc3 21 bxc3 fxg5) 19...dxe5 20 fxe5 Nd5 and here White should probably bail out with 21 e6 Bxb5 22 Nxb5 when 22...Rc5 is pretty level.

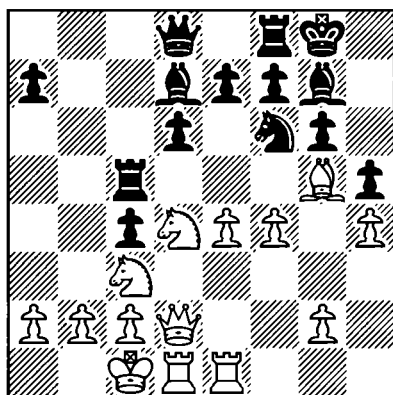
a2) 15 f4 Nc4 16 Bxc4 and now:

a21) 16...Rxc4 17 e5 b4! 18 Qd3 (after 18 exf6 both 18...bxc3 and 18...exf6 have proved okay for Black) 18...Rxd4 19 Qxd4 bxc3 20 exf6 exf6 21 Qxd6 fxg5 22 Qxd7 Qa5 23 Re8 Qxa2 24 Rxf8+ Bxf8 25 bxc3 gxf4 with a likely draw, as has occurred in practice several times.

a22) 16...bxc4!? (**Diagram 23**) has always been considered bad.



**Diagram 22 (B)**



**Diagram 23 (W)**

However, 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 e5 Bxh4!? (the problem is 18...Bg7 19 e6! as in A.Karpov-G.Sosonko, Tilburg 1979) 19 Rh1 Bg4! 20 Rxh4 (or 20 Nde2 e6) 20...Bxd1 21 Qxd1 dxe5 22 fxe5 Rxe5 results in unclear play.

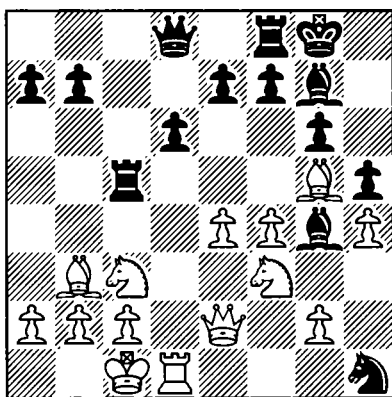
b) 14 f4 is White's main alternative to the main lines, 14 g4 and 14 Kb1. After 14...Nc4 15 Qd3 (Black is doing well after both 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 e5 Bg4! and 15 Qe2 Bg4 16 Nf3 Nxb2! 17 Kxb2 Qa5) 15...Ng4! 16 Bxc4 Nf2 17 Qe2 Nxh1 18 Bb3 (after 18 Nd5 Black has done okay with 18...Rxd5 19 Bxd5 Qb6, but 18...Bg4! looks even better) Black has:

b1) 18...a5 was Dearing's recommendation, but after 19 Qe3! a4 20 Nxa4 Bxa4 21 Bxa4 Rc4 22 Bb3 Bxd4 23 Rxd4 Rxd4 24 Qxd4 correspondence games have shown that White is better.

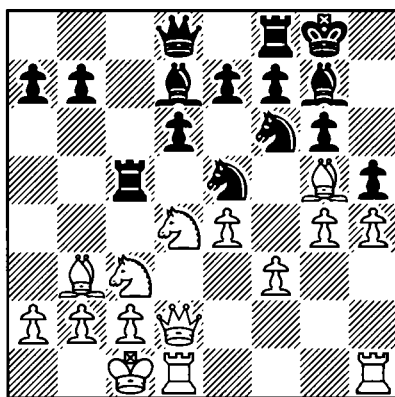


b2) 18...Qb6 19 f5! (White scores well with this; worse are 19 Nd5? Rxd5 20 exd5 Bxd4 when the g5-bishop is misplaced and 19 Nf3 Ng3 20 Qe1 Be6!, with the idea 21 Qxg3? Bxc3 22 bxc3 Bxb3 23 axb3 Rxc3 when Black's attack is much stronger) 19...Bxd4 20 Rxd4 Rxf5 21 exf5 Qxd4 22 Qe1!? (after 22 fxg6 Qg1+ 23 Nd1 Bg4 24 gxf7+ Kg7 25 Qd2 Golubev's suggestion 25...Rxf7! holds up) 22...Bxf5 23 Qxh1 e6 (White also maintained the initiative after 23...Be6 24 Bxe7 Re8 25 Bg5 Bxb3 26 axb3 Qf2 27 Bd2 Qg3 28 Qf1 Qxh4 29 Nd5 Re5 30 c4 in G.Hoskyn-W.Smillie, correspondence 2004) 24 Qe1 a6 25 Be3 Qg4 26 g3 b5 (Jones suggested 26...Qf3 as an improvement) 27 Bf4 Rd8 28 Qe3! (with the idea Nd1-f2) 28...Qh3 29 Qg1! and White's position was the more pleasant in B.Macieja-G.Jones, Warsaw (rapid) 2010.

b3) 18...Bg4! 19 Nf3 (**Diagram 24**) 19...Rxc3! 20 bxc3 Qa5.



**Diagram 24 (B)**



**Diagram 25 (B)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Many openings have hidden resources in older variations that were considered to be good for one side or the other. The Dragon has many such positions and there is a lot of fertile ground... in older lines! In the modern (computer!) age of preparation some lines may be refuted, but many can be rehabilitated.

Now:

b31) After 21 Rd3 White cannot round up the errant h1-knight so easily. 21...Bxc3 (Black could also consider 21...Rc8!? or 21...e6!?) 22 Qe3 Rc8 23 f5 (23 Kb1!?) 23...Qa3+ 24 Kd1 Qb2 25 fxg6 Qa1+ 26 Qc1 Nf2+ 27 Ke2 Nxd3 28 gxf7+ was

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

R.Eames-I.Snape, British League 2005. Now the most accurate is 28...Kg7! 29 Bh6+ (or 29 Qxa1 Bxa1 30 cxd3 e6) 29...Kh7 30 cxd3 (30 Qxa1? Bxa1 31 cxd3 Kxh6) 30...Qxc1 31 Bxc1 Kg7 when Black should win.

b32) Following 21 Rxh1 Qxc3 Black intends perpetual check with 22...Qa1+ and 23...Qc3+. The attempt to avoid this with 22 Qd1 was successful after 22...Bxf3? 23 gxf3 Qe3+ 24 Kb1 Qc3 25 e5! dxe5 26 Qd3 Qc7 27 Qxg6 when White was winning in T.Ernst-J.Asendorf, Hamburg 2005 (the stem game for 19...Rxc3!). However, 22...a5! threatens 23...a4 24 Bxa4 Qa3+ and gives Black the initiative: for example, 23 Bxe7 Re8 24 Bxd6 Qb2+ 25 Kd2 Rxe4 with a winning attack.

Now we return to 14 g4 (**Diagram 25**):

### 14...hxcg4

There is no reasonable alternative.

### 15 h5

This is the most direct. White does not keep track of the pawns.

The main move 15 f4 will be considered in the next two games. Instead 15 Bxf6 scores terribly after 15...Bxf6 16 h5?! (White should try to wiggle back into the main lines with 16 f4 Nc4 17 Qd3 or 17 Qe2) 16...g5 17 Nd5 Rxd5 and Black is much better after 18 Bxd5 gxf3 or 18 exd5 gxf3 19 Rdg1 g4.

### 15...Nxh5 16 Nd5 (Diagram 26)

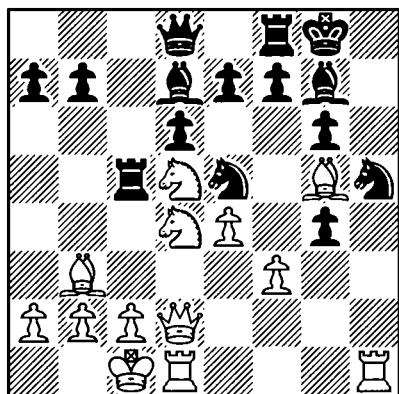


Diagram 26 (B)

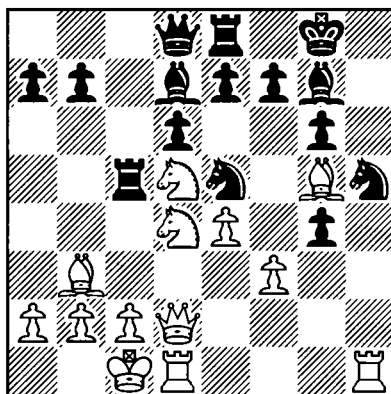


Diagram 27 (W)

White has not scored particularly well with this move. He can try to get back on a more solid theoretical footing with 16 f4 Nc4 17 Qe2 (17 Qd3 b5 transposes to

note 'a' to White's 17th move in Game 5, which is great for Black) 17...b5 18 f5, transposing to Game 6, but 17...Rxc5! is simpler. After 18 fxc5 Ne5 Black has an excellent position.

### **16...Re8 (Diagram 27)**

The typical exchange sacrifice 16...Rxd5 is fine too. After 17 Bxd5 Qb6 White has:

a) 18 Bb3 a5 19 Rxh5? gxh5 20 Qh2 gxf3 21 Qxh5 Bg4 22 Qh4 f2 23 Be3 Nd3+ 24 Kb1 Bxd1 25 Nf5 Bxc2+ 26 Kxc2 Qc7+ 0-1 G.Kjurkchiiski-M.Perunovic, Bansko 2010.

b) 18 c3 e6 19 Bb3 gxf3 20 Bh6 Qc5 (at first the computer likes 20...Bxh6, but after 21 Qxh6 Qc5 22 Rdg1 Black is busted) 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Rh3 Bc6 (22...f2 23 Qxf2 Ng4 could be met with 24 Qh4!?) 23 Bd5 Rh8! (not 23...exd5 24 Rxh5!) 24 Bxc6 bxc6 is comfortable for Black, since 25 Nxf3? fails to 25...Nd3+! 26 Qxd3 (or 26 Kb1 Nf2) 26...Nf4 as pointed out by Dearing.

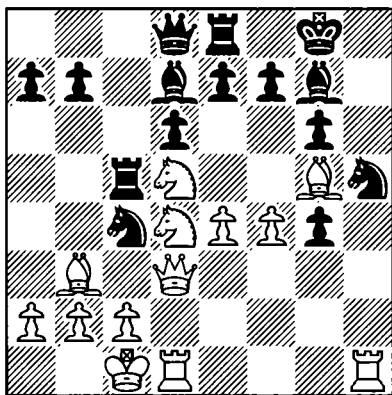
### **17 f4**

White can also consider 17 Rxh5 gxh5 18 Qh2 Rxd5 (18...gxf3 19 Qxh5 looks dangerous) 19 Bxd5 Qb6 20 Qxh5 e6 21 Bb3 gxf3 and now:

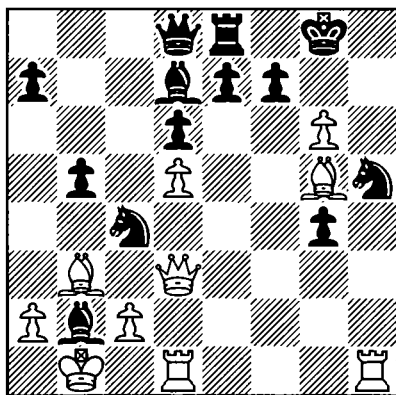
a) 22 Bh6 Bxh6+ (22...Qc5!?) 23 Qxh6 f2 24 Nf5? (after 24 Qf6 a perpetual seems likely) 24...exf5 25 Rh1 f1Q+ 26 Rxf1 d5 0-1 was A.Martin Gonzalez-A.Romero Holmes, Spain 1987.

b) 22 Be3 Qd8 (22...Qa5!? could do with a test) 23 Nxf3 (not 23 Bg5? Qa5!) 23...Nxf3 24 Qxf3 Qf6 25 Qxf6 Bxf6 26 Bf4 Bc6 27 Rg1+ Kf8 28 Bxd6+ Be7 29 Bf4 with a draw in S.Marton Bardocz-N.Grima, correspondence 2004.

### **17...Nc4 18 Qd3 (Diagram 28)**



**Diagram 28 (B)**



**Diagram 29 (B)**

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

White has tried a couple of other moves as well:

a) 18 Qe2 b5 (18...Na5!?) 19 f5 Rxd5! (much better than 19...Ng3? 20 Qh2) 20 exd5 Bxd4! 21 Rxd4 Bxf5 gives Black good chances.

b) 18 Qf2 b5 19 f5 a5 20 Qh4 (instead 20 a4 bxa4 21 Bxc4 Rxc4 22 Rxh5 gxh5 23 f6 was played in J.Becerra Rivero-A.Martinez, Puerto Padre 1990, and now 23...exf6 24 Nxf6+ Bxf6 25 Bxf6 Qa8! with the idea ...Qxe4-g6 would give Black every chance to fight off the attack) 20...Rxd5 21 exd5 was S.Kravtsov-S.Solovjov, St Petersburg 1999. Now 21...Bxd4! 22 Bxc4 (after 22 Rxd4 Ne5 with ideas like ...Bxf5, ...Nf3, and ...a4 Black is much better) 22...Bxb2+ 23 Kxb2 bxc4 24 fxg6 fxg6 gives Black very strong counterplay.

### **18...b5!?**

This move has been considered too risky, but Black seems to be holding his own. There are a couple of decent alternatives, however:

a) 18...Bb5 19 Nxb5 Nxb2 20 Nxe7+ Rxe7 21 Qxd6 Qxd6 22 Rxd6 Rxe4 (or 22...Kf8) 23 Rd8+ Kh7 24 Bxf7 Nd3+! is a mess.

b) 18...Qc8!? is very rare, but looks good: 19 Nxe7+ (or 19 f5 Rxd5 20 exd5 Ne5 21 Qe2 Bxf5 with excellent chances for Black in H.Koch-U.Goy, correspondence 2007) 19...Rxe7 20 Bxe7 Nxf4 21 Qf1 Be5 looks excellent for Black.

### **19 f5 Rxd5**

This is not forced, but is thematic and gives Black good prospects.

### **20 exd5 Bxd4! 21 fxg6**

After 21 Qxd4 Bxf5 Black's king is safe and he has several pawns for the exchange.

### **21...Bxb2+ 22 Kb1 (Diagram 29) 22...Ng7!**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** With this move Black is able to play for a win against his much higher-rated opponent. Black's position looks very scary, but he is able to defend and keep a material edge, and White's king is not so safe either.

It had always been believed that Black had to instead play 22...f5 here. After 23 Rxh5 Qa5 (long ago Golubev suggested 23...Be5, but 24 Qf1! threatens Qh1 followed by Rh8+ and Qh7-f7 mate) 24 Bd2! (not 24 Rdh1 Bg7 25 Qg3 Qc3 when Black defended his king and exchanged into a winning ending in D.Donchev-S.Semkov, Pernik 1982) 24...Nxd2+ 25 Kxb2 Nc4+ 26 Kb1, rather than 26...Na3+ 27 Kc1 Qb4 28 Rxf5! Nc4 29 Bxc4 bxc4 when White has 30 Rf4!, Black could try 26...Kg7!? when !

do not see more than a perpetual check with 27 Bxc4 bxc4 28 Qd4+ Kxg6 29 Rg5+ Kxg5 30 Qg7+ Kf4 31 Qd4+ Kg5.

### **23 Bxc4**

Instead 23 exf7+? Kxf7 24 Rdf1+ Bf6 leads nowhere, while 23 Rh8+? Kxh8 24 gxf7 was refuted by the cool 24...Nf5 in V.Jankovic-H.Sipic, Pula 2002.

### **23...bxc4 24 Qe4**

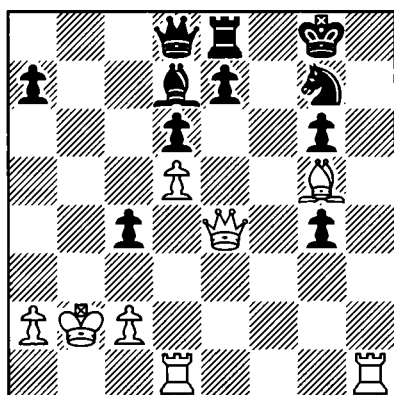
Black is winning after both 24 Qxc4 Qb6 and 24 gxf7+ Kxf7 25 Qxc4 Qb6.

### **24...fxg6**

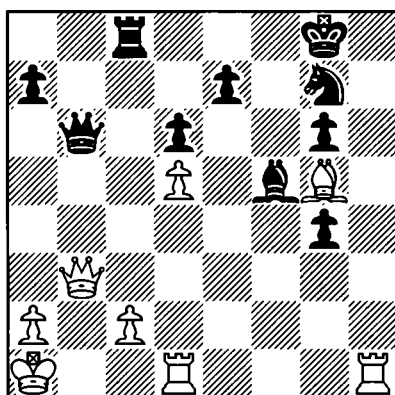
Black must avoid 24...Be5? 25 Rh8+! when White's queen comes to h1 and quickly mates.

### **25 Kxb2 (Diagram 30)**

Not 25 Qxg6? Bf5 when the queen is trapped.



**Diagram 30 (B)**



**Diagram 31 (B)**

The position looks very messy as neither king is particularly safe. In fact it is Black who is in complete control.

### **25...Qb6+!**

This allows Black to play for a win with little risk. It is tempting to play 25...c3+, but it seems that White can escape with accurate play: for example, 26 Ka1 (after 26 Kxc3 Qa5+ 27 Kb2 Rb8+ 28 Kc1 Bf5 the attack is decisive) 26...Qa5 27 Qxg6 Bf5 28 Rh8+! Kxh8 29 Qf7 Qb4 30 Rb1 (not 30 Rh1+ Bh7) 30...Qd4 (this leads to a draw; instead Black could take a chance and play on with 30...Qxb1+!? 31 Kxb1 Kh7 with

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

a messy position) 31 Bxe7 Bg6! 32 Rh1+ Bh5 33 Rxh5+ Nxh5 34 Qxe8+ Kg7 35 Bf8+ Kf6 (it is also a draw after 35...Kh7 36 Qxh5+ Kg8 37 Qg6+ Kxf8 38 Qf5+) 36 Be7+ Kg7 37 Qf8+ with perpetual check.

### **26 Ka1 Bf5 27 Qxc4 Rc8 28 Qb3 (Diagram 31) 28...Bxc2**

This is fine, although 28...Rxc2 is more natural. Black could also keep the queens on the board with 28...Qc5!?

### **29 Qxb6 axb6 30 Rc1 Rc4 31 Bxe7?!**

White is eager to restore material equality, but this pawn is not very important yet. It was better to exchange rooks and eliminate the g-pawn with 31 Rhg1 Kf7 32 Kb2 Bd3 33 Rxc4 Bxc4 34 Rxg4, although Black maintains some chances after 34...Bxd5.

### **31...Nf5 32 Bf6 b5 33 a4?**

White panics. Instead 33 Kb2 Bd3 34 Rhg1 g3 would give him some chances to survive.

### **33...bxa4**

Black was clearly concerned with his king, but 33...Rxa4+ 34 Kb2 Be4 35 Rh8+ Kf7 36 Bg5 Rb4+ 37 Ka3 Rc4 would have been more convincing.

### **34 Rh2?**

The final mistake. 34 Kb2 Bd3 35 Rc3 Rxc3 36 Kxc3 Be4 37 Ra1 Bxd5 38 Rxa4 would leave some chances to hold on.

### **34...Bd3**

Now Black is winning and he does not give White another chance.

**35 Bc3 g3 36 Rh8+ Kf7 37 Rh7+ Ke8 38 Re1+ Be4 39 Rh8+ Kd7 40 Rh7+ Kc8 41 Kb2 g2 42 Rf7 Rc7 43 Rf8+ Kb7 44 Ba5 Rc2+ 45 Ka3 Rc4 46 Rf6 Ne3 47 Rg1 Rd4 48 Bc3 Rd3 49 Rf7+ Kc8 50 Rf8+ Kd7 51 Rf7+ Ke8 52 Rf6 Rxc3+ 53 Kxa4 Rc4+ 54 Kb5 Rc5+ 55 Ka4 Bc2+ 56 Ka3 0-1**

## *Game 5* **L.Aguero Jimenez-Y.Gutierrez Delgado** **Havana 2009**

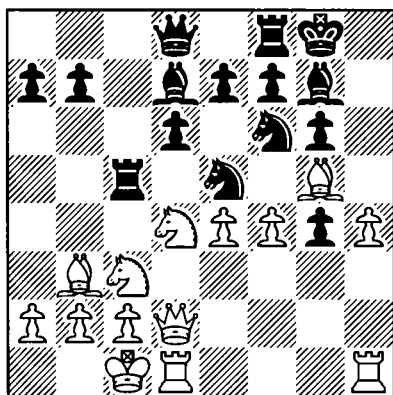
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 g4 hxg4 15 f4 (Diagram 32)**

This is the main line. White displaces the black knight and creates the possibility of playing f4-f5 in addition to h4-h5.

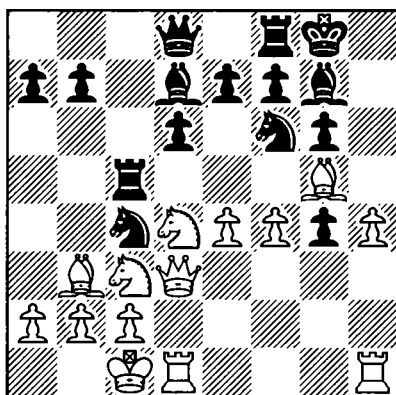
### 15...Nc4

Recently 15...Nc6!? was tried in Wang Puchen-D.Smerdon, Auckland 2009. Here the critical continuation is 16 Bxf6! Bxf6 17 e5 which looks unpleasant for Black. If 17...Bg7 18 h5 gives White a strong attack.

### 16 Qd3 (Diagram 33)



**Diagram 32 (B)**



**Diagram 33 (B)**

This is played less often and scores worse than 16 Qe2, which is considered in the next game, but it is not clear that it is any weaker.

### 16...b5

This is almost universally played and Black has scored well with it. Instead 16...Na5 is well met by 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 e5! when with the queen on d3, White has pressure against g6 and down the d-file. The rare 16...Qc8!? is possible, however.

### 17 f5 (Diagram 34)

Other moves have brought little success:

a) 17 h5?! Nxb5 18 Nd5 (this is not very good, but both 18 f5 Bxd4! 19 Qxd4 e5! and 18 e5 dxe5 19 Ndx5 exf4 20 Bxc4 Rxc5 21 Qxd7 Qxd7 22 Rxd7 f3 leave Black with a winning position) and here both 18...Nxf4 and 18...f6! are good for Black.

b) 17 e5 dxe5 18 Ndx5 (18 Bxf6 Bxf6 is variation 'c') 18...Nxb2! 19 Kxb2 e4! 20 Qd2 Qb6! 21 Nd4 Rfc8 22 Nce2 a5! gave Black a winning attack in J.Atri Sangari-G.Vescovi, Moscow Olympiad 1994.

c) 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 e5 dxe5 19 Ndx5 Nxb2! (19...Bxb5 20 Qxd8 Rxd8 21 Rxd8+ Kg7 22 Ne4 Rc7 23 Nxf6 exf6 24 h5 gave White some initiative in P.Wolff-R.Santos,

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Maringa 1991) 20 Kxb2 (20 Qxg6+ Bg7 21 Kxb2 exf4 is very good for Black: for example, 22 Kc1 Qc8!) 20...exf4 21 Kc1 (21 Qxg6+ Bg7 does not help White) and now after 21...Kg7 or 21...e6 Black's pawns give him good chances.

### 17...Ne5

Also quite playable is 17...gxf5!? 18 exf5 (wisely avoiding 18 Nxf5? Bxf5 19 exf5 Nxb2! 20 Kxb2 Rxc3!) 18...Qc8! attacking the f5-pawn. White has:

a) 19 Rhf1 Ne5 20 Qe3 Rxc3 21 Qxc3 (Black has more than enough for the exchange after 21 bxc3 a5) 21...Qxc3 22 bxc3 Rc8 was quickly drawn in G.Sax-K.Georgiev, Montreal 1986, but Black must be doing well here.

b) 19 Rdf1 (by playing this rook White makes the push of the h-pawn more dangerous) 19...Ne5 (other possibilities are 19...Nd5!? and Dearing's suggestion 19...b4!?) 20 Qe3 20...b4!? (or simply 20...Rxc3 when Black has compensation after 21 Qxc3 Qxc3 22 bxc3 Rc8 or 21 bxc3 Qc5 22 h5 Kh7 23 h6 Bh8) 21 Bxf6 Bxf6 22 Ne4 and now instead of 22...a5?! 23 Qh6 when White had a strong attack in H.Sorial-I.Hakki, Cairo 1999, Black should keep the white queen out with 22...Kh7!? with the idea 23 Ng5+ Kg7.

### 18 Qe3 (Diagram 35) 18...b4

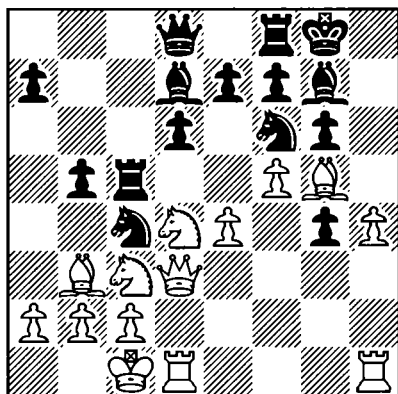


Diagram 34 (B)

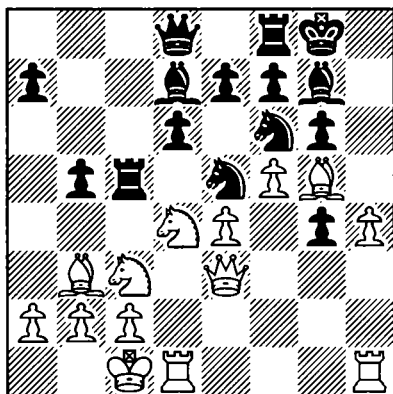


Diagram 35 (B)

Black forces the pace, but 18...Kh7!? 19 h5 (or 19 fxg6+ fxg6!?) 19...gxf5 and the immediate 18...gxf5!? 19 Nxf5 Bxf5 20 exf5 Qc8, with the idea 21 Bxf6 Rxc3!, both look playable as well.

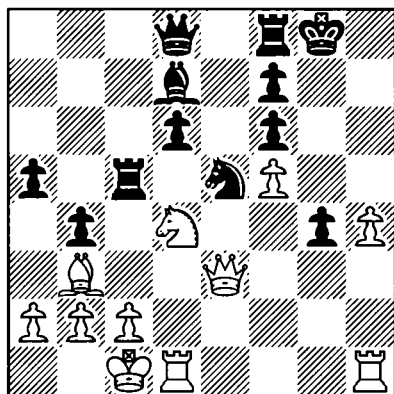
### 19 Bxf6



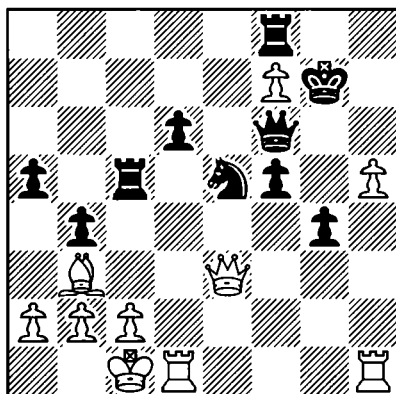
*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

Worse is 19 Nd5 Nxd5 20 Bxd5 gxf5 21 Nxf5 (if 21 Bh6 e6 with the idea of ...Qf6 favours Black) 21...Bxf5 22 exf5 Qd7 which gives Black good chances.

**19...Bxf6 20 Nd5 gxf5 21 exf5 a5 22 Nxf6+ exf6 (Diagram 36)**



**Diagram 36 (W)**



**Diagram 37 (W)**

Dearing, who appeared to be quoting *Informant*, considered that Black was much better here.

**23 Ne6!**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** White is certainly not worse after this shot. He may not be better either, but he at least has the safer king and his position is the easier to play. Fortunately for Black, he has some decent alternatives on moves 17 and 18.

**23...Bxe6**

After 23...fxe6 24 fxe6 Bxe6 25 Bxe6+ Kg7 26 Bf5 White has good compensation for the pawn.

**24 fxe6 Kg7 25 exf7 f5 26 h5 Qf6 (Diagram 37)**

The position remains unclear. Black's king is a little exposed, but his passed pawns could become very strong. White is now tempted by a combination, but it should not work.

**27 Rxd6? Qxd6 28 Qg5+ Ng6?**

Black could refute White's play with 28...Kh7 29 Qg8+ Kh6!.

**29 hxg6 Qxg6 30 Qe7!**

Now White is winning. There is no good defence to 31 Qxf8+.

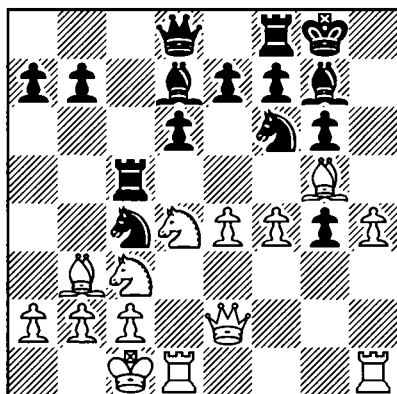
**30...Rxc2+**

This hardly helps, but other moves lose quickly as well: for example, 30...Qf6 31 Rh7+, 30...Rxf7 31 Bxf7 Qxf7 32 Rh7+, or 30...Rcc8 31 Qe5+ Qf6 32 Rh7+.

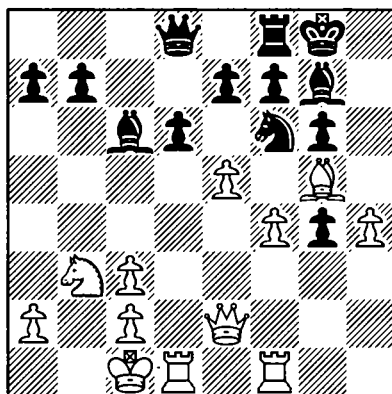
**31 Bxc2 Rxf7 32 Qe5+ Qf6 33 Qh2 Kf8 34 Qb8+ 1-0**

*Game 6*  
**A.Martinez-J.Gonzalez Fuertes**  
Correspondence 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 g4 hxg4 15 f4 Nc4 16 Qe2**  
(Diagram 38)



**Diagram 38 (B)**



**Diagram 39 (B)**

This could be considered the main line of the 14 g4 variation. White's queen is less exposed here than it is on d3, but the c3-knight is less well protected and White does not have so much pressure on the d-file.

**16...b5**

This is the most common move, although it has seen strong competition from the more modern alternatives 16...Na5!? and 16...Qc8!?



**NOTE: Very often a line loses its lustre when more than one attractive defence can be found. Here Black has three tempting continuations and for that reason 14 g4 has been pushed aside by 14 Kb1, which is covered in Games 7-11.**

So we will also examine:

a) 16...Na5!? 17 e5 Nxb3+ 18 Nxb3 Rxc3 19 bxc3 Bc6! 20 Rhf1 (White is probably better off with 20 exf6 exf6 21 Qxg4 Bxh1 22 Rxh1 fxc5 23 hxc5 with unclear play) **(Diagram 39)** when Black has a pleasant choice:

a1) 20...Ne4 21 Qxg4 Nxc3 and now rather than 22 Rxd6 Nxa2+ 23 Kb1 (not 23 Kb2? Qxd6) 23...Nc3+ 24 Kb2 Na4+ 25 Ka3 Qe8! ,White should probably try 22 exd6, but Black has at least a draw with 22...Nxa2+ 23 Kb1 Nc3+.

a2) 20...Nd5! is a relatively new idea: 21 Qe1 (if 21 Qxg4 Ne3) 21...Qc7! 22 c4 Nb6 23 exd6 exd6 24 f5 gxf5 25 Rxf5 Bd7 26 Rf2 Nxc4 27 Bf6 Re8 was M.Shchebenyuk-J.Bennborn, correspondence 2005. This looks messy, but it is in fact good for Black.

b) 16...Qc8 is usually adorned with an '!' and in fact I have played this move myself. White has several options, but only 'b3' is of any value:

b1) 17 h5?! Nxh5 18 Nd5 Rxd5 19 exd5 b5 is very nice for Black. A recent example went 20 Bxc4 bxc4 21 Qxe7? Re8 22 Nf5 Bxf5 23 Qxd6 Qb7 0-1 S.Grover-B.Smith, Paleohora 2009.

b2) 17 f5 Nxb2! (this is even better than 17...e5) 18 Kxb2 (18 Bxf6? Nxd1) 18...Rxc3 19 fxg6 Rxb3+! 20 axb3 fxg6 when practice has shown that Black is much better.

b3) 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 and now:

b31) 18 Bxc4 Rxc4 19 Nd5 Re8! is comfortable for Black.

b32) 18 h5 g3!? 19 Rd3 Bg4 20 Qg2 was R.Gericke-U.Goy, correspondence 2007, and here Black should have played 20...Nxb2! 21 Rxg3 (or 21 Kxb2 Rxc3 22 Rxc3 Bxd4) 21...Rxc3 22 Rxg4 Rxb3! 23 axb3 (if 23 Nxb3 Nd3+ 24 Kb1 Ne1! with the idea 25 Rxe1 Qc3) 23...Bxd4 24 hxg6 Nd3+ when his attack will arrive first.

b33) 18 Nd5 **(Diagram 40)** with a further divide:

b331) 18...Re8 19 Nxf6+ exf6 20 h5 Kg7 (20...g5 21 fxg5 does not look much better) 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 f5! has proven to favour White in a couple of correspondence games of M.Romero.

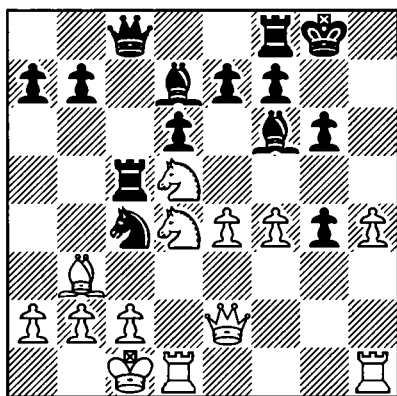
b332) 18...b5 was considered best by Dearing. Black still looks okay after 19 h5 g5.

b333) 18...Rxd5 is the most forcing; Black takes control of his own destiny. Here 19 exd5 b5 20 h5 g5 21 fxg5 (21 Qe4 gxf4! 22 Qxf4 Qc5 23 Qe4 Bg5+ 24 Kb1 f5 is good for Black as pointed out by Dearing) 21...Bxg5+ 22 Kb1 f5 (the usual move, but the

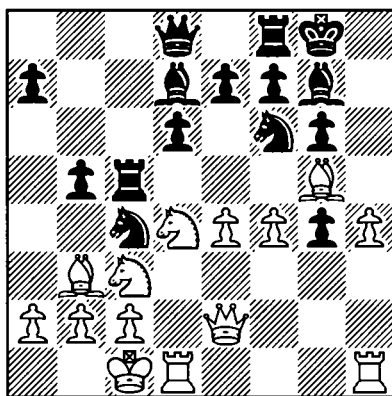
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

rare 22...Qc5!? may well be better) 23 h6 (after 23 Rd3 f4 24 Bxc4 Qxc4 White surprisingly resigned in V.Ivanchuk-V.Topalov, Belgrade 1995) 23...f4 reaches a critical position where 24 Ne6 (or 24 Rh5 Bf6) 24...Bxe6 25 dxe6 Ne3 26 Rxd6 Qa8 is unclear, but White's king is certainly the safer.

Now we return to 16...b5 (**Diagram 41**):



**Diagram 40 (B)**



**Diagram 41 (W)**

### 17 f5

This gives White a dangerous initiative. After the alternative 17 h5 Black has two good replies:

a) 17...Nxh5 18 f5 Qa5 19 Nd5 Rxd5 20 exd5 Bxd4!? (instead 20...Bxf5 21 Nxf5 Bxb2+ 22 Kb1 Qc3 should lead to perpetual) 21 Rxd4 Ng3 wins material, although Black will still have to be careful.

b) 17...Rxc5 is safer, since 18 fxc5 Nxh5 19 Ncxb5 Na5! (Black threatens both...e5 and...Ng3) 20 Nf5 Nxb3+! 21 axb3 gxf5 22 Rxh5 Qa5 is very good for Black: for example, 23 Nc3 Qa1+ 24 Kd2 Qxb2, 23 Nd4 Qa1+ 24 Kd2 Qxb2, or 23 Na3 Qe5!.

### 17...gxf5 (**Diagram 42**)

The alternative 17...Qa5 has scored well for Black, but it looks risky after 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Qxg4 Kg7 (**Diagram 43**) when White has many tempting continuations:

a) 20 h5 g5 21 h6+ Kh7 22 Rh3! overprotects the c3-knight.

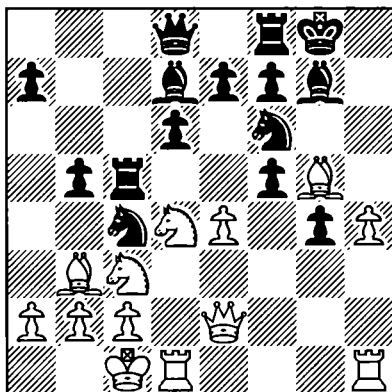
b) 20 Qg3 Be5 21 Qf3 e6 (Black could consider 21...Qb6 or 21...Rh8) 22 h5 g5 was L.Yudasin-B.Alterman, Haifa 1993. Black won, but this looks a bit shaky.

c) 20 Rh3 Rfc8 21 h5 (after 21 Nd5 Rxd5 22 exd5 Nxb2! 23 Kxb2 Bxf5 24 Qf3 Bxh3

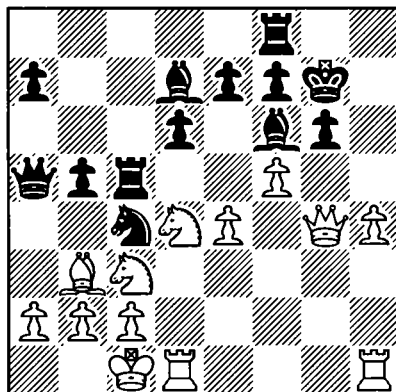
*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

25 Qxh3 Rh8 Black has excellent compensation for the piece) 21...g5 22 Nd5 Rxd5 23 h6+ Kh7 24 exd5 Qb6 is unclear, but I do not trust Black's position.

**18 Bxf6!**



**Diagram 42 (W)**



**Diagram 43 (W)**

The alternative 18 exf5 gives Black the extra option of 18...Re5! with a couple of recent examples from the same player:

a) 19 Qd3 Qc8 20 Rhf1 Nd5 21 Nxd5 Rxd5 22 f6 exf6 23 Bxf6 Re8 when Black had sufficient play in P.Anisimov-R.Mankeyev, St Petersburg 2006.

b) 19 Qg2 Ne3 20 Bxe3 Rxe3 21 h5 Bh6 22 Kb1 Kh8 (or 22...Rxc3!? 23 bxc3 Qa8) 23 Nd5 Nxd5 24 Qxd5 Qa8! (exchanging queens favours Black) 25 Qxa8 Rxa8 26 Bxf7 Rf8 when Black was much better and went on to win in G.Harutjunyan-R.Mankeyev, Alushta 2007.

**18...Bxf6 19 exf5 (Diagram 44) 19...Ne5!?**



**WARNING:** Black 'boasts' a score of 0-6 with this move in my database, but it may be best nonetheless. Clearly Black is walking a tightrope in this variation, even if it remains (barely) playable.

The alternative is 19...Rxf5 20 Qxg4+ (Black has excellent compensation for the exchange after 20 Nxf5 Bxf5) 20...Rg5 (**Diagram 45**), but 21 hxg5! Bxg4 22 gxf6 Bxd1? (better is 22...exf6 23 Rdg1 f5 24 Rh5 Re8 25 Bxc4 bxc4 26 Rxf5 Qh4 27 Nf3 Qh6+ 28 Kd1 Qg6 29 Rxg4 Qxg4 30 Rg5+ Qxg5 31 Nxg5 when White has the better

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

chances as shown in several games) 23 Nc6 Bf3 24 Nxe7+ Qxe7 25 Rg1+ Kh8 26 fxe7 Re8 27 Nxb5 Ne5 (27...d5? 28 Re1) 28 Nxd6 Rxe7 29 Rf1 Kg8 30 Nxf7 Rxf7 31 Kd2 Be4 32 Bxf7+ Nxf7 33 c4 Kf8 34 Kc3 Bb7 35 Re1 1-0 was Z.Efimenko-A.Areshchenko, Kramatorsk 2001. This had all been seen before in E.Tsuboi-G.Vescovi, Brazil 1991, although there Black struggled on for another dozen moves or so before giving up.

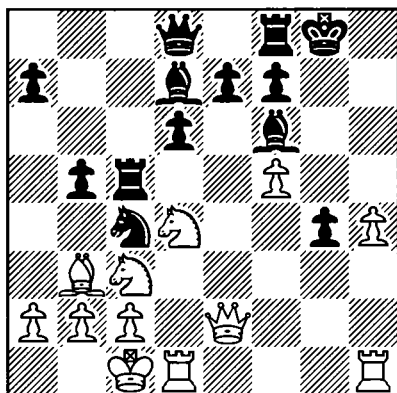


Diagram 44 (B)

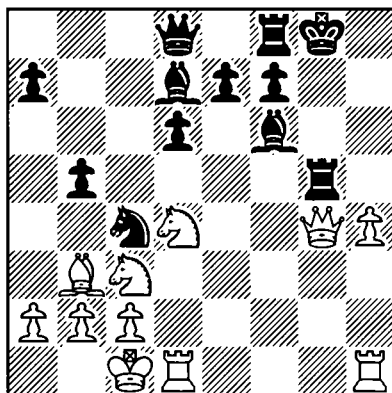


Diagram 45 (W)

Returning to 19...Ne5 (Diagram 46):

### 20 Rhg1!?

This looks the most dangerous. Black must be careful after other moves as well, but the defence is less complicated:

a) 20 Ne4 Qc8! 21 Nxf6+ (Black has enough compensation after 21 Nxc5 Qxc5) 21...exf6 22 Rdf1 was S.Djucic-D.Antonic, Yugoslavia 1994. Now 22...Kh7! looks at least okay for Black.

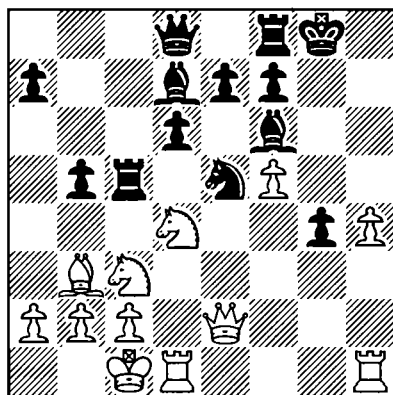
b) 20 Rdg1 is similar to the game. Now 20...Bg7? 21 Rxg4 Nxg4 22 Qxg4 e5? (no better is 22...Kh7 23 Ne4! and 22...e6 23 fxe6 is ugly as well) 23 Ne4 1-0 was R.Olthof-H.Tiemann, correspondence 1986. Black could defend, however, with 20...Kh8! and then:

b1) 21 Rxg4 Nxg4 22 Qxg4 Bxd4 when Black covers the g1-square and threatens ...Bxf5. White has a perpetual with 23 Qh5+, but no more than that.

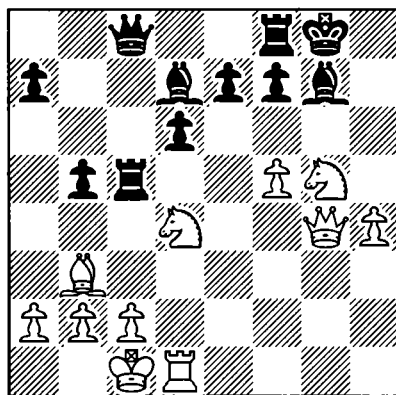
b2) 21 Ne4 Qc8 22 Nxf6 (if 22 Nxc5 Qxc5) 22...exf6 23 Rxg4 Nxg4 24 Qxg4 Bxf5 and Black is holding things together.

## 20...Bg7?

This just loses. Black has to get off of the h-file:



**Diagram 46 (W)**



**Diagram 47 (W)**

a) 20...Kh7 and now:

a1) 21 Rxg4 Nxg4 22 Qxg4 Bxd4 and now 23 Qxd4 Bxf5 is good for Black, so White should take a draw with 23 Qh5+.

a2) 21 Ne4! Qc8 22 Nxf6+ exf6 23 Rxg4 Nxg4 (Black will suffer after 23...Bxf5 24 Nxf5 Qxf5 25 Rgd4) 24 Qxg4 Bxf5 25 Qh5+ Kg7 26 Nxf5+ Qxf5 27 Rg1+ and White wins.

b) 20...Kh8! is the right square:

b1) 21 Ne4 Qc8 22 Nxf6 (22 Nxc5 Qxc5!) 22...exf6 23 Rxg4 Nxg4 24 Qxg4 Bxf5 25 Qh5+ and now Black has 25...Bh7! with unclear play.

b2) 21 Rxg4!? Nxg4 22 Qxg4 Bxd4 23 Qxd4+ (this is now check, but Black can survive; instead 23 Qh5+ is a draw) 23...Re5 (Black's king is more exposed after 23...Kh7 24 f6) 24 f6 Qb6 is unclear: for example, 25 fxe7 Re8 26 Qxb6 axb6 27 Nd5 Bc6 28 Nxb6 R8xe7 and Black is no worse.

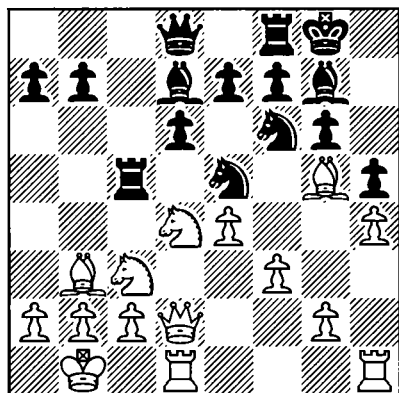
**21 Rxg4 Nxg4 22 Qxg4 Kh7 23 Ne4 Qc8**

No better is 23...Bh6+ 24 Ng5+ 1-0 S.Wierzbicki-L.Maliszewski, correspondence 1992. Black loses after 24...Kh8 25 Qh5 or 24...Kg7 25 Kb1!.

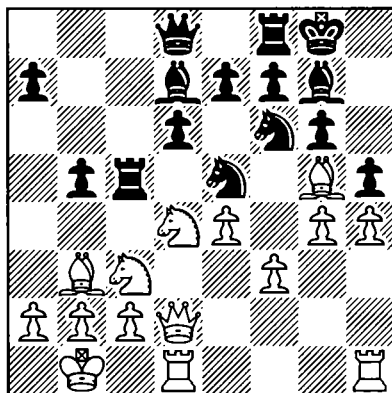
**24 Ng5+ Kg8 (Diagram 47) 25 Nge6! fxe6 26 Rg1 Rf7 27 fxe6 Bxe6 28 Bxe6 1-0**

*Game 7*  
**A.Motylev-V.Mikhalevski**  
Budva (rapid) 2009

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 Kb1 (Diagram 48)**



**Diagram 48 (B)**



**Diagram 49 (B)**

As we have seen before and will see again, this move is almost always useful for White. Now Black can initiate action on the queenside or he can make a useful prophylactic move himself.

**14...b5**

This is the most aggressive approach. Black trusts his defensive formation and launches his counterattack.

**15 g4 (Diagram 49)**

White does not have any more useful moves, so the time is ripe for action.

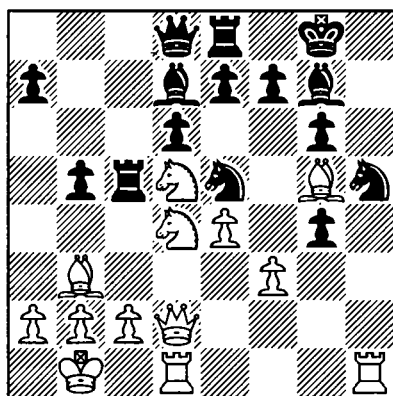
**15...hxg4**

This is considered to be quite risky, but the same thing could be said for the Dragon itself. The alternative 15...a5 is considered in the next two games.

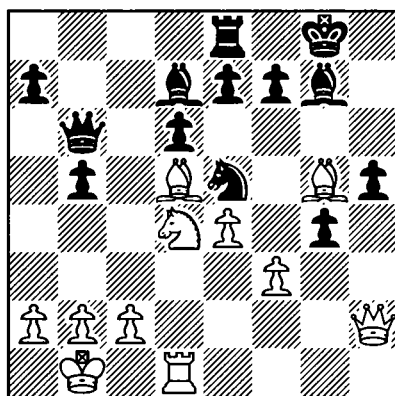
**16 h5 Nxh5 17 Nd5 Re8 (Diagram 50)**

Now White makes a typical exchange sacrifice.





**Diagram 50 (W)**



**Diagram 51 (W)**

**18 Rxh5! gxh5 19 Qh2 Rxd5!**



**WARNING: Material counts in the Dragon, but not if you get checkmated! Here Black must not hesitate to sacrifice back to slow down White's initiative.**

### **20 Bxd5 Qb6 (Diagram 51)**

The alternative is 20...Qc8?!, but this looks too dangerous after 21 Qxh5 e6 22 Bb3 Qc5 and now:

- a) 23 fxg4?! Ng6 allowed Black to defend in D.Stellwagen-G.Jones, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.
- b) 23 f4!? Nc4 24 Qxg4 Kf8 was A.Vouldis-S.Tiviakov, Plovdiv 2003. Here 25 Bxc4 bxc4 26 Qh4! with a clear advantage is given by Vouldis.
- c) 23 Bh6! pushes Black to the edge of defeat and probably over it. After 23...Rc8 24 Nf5! exf5 25 Qg5 Ng6 26 c3! (but not 26 Qxg6? Qxc2+!) Black's position hardly looks defensible.

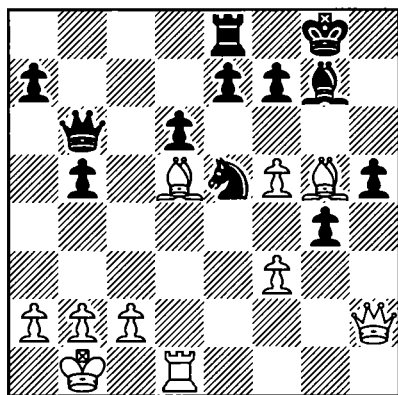
### **21 Nf5**

The alternative 21 Qxh5 gives Black chances to defend with 21...e6. Now White should avoid 22 Nf5? exf5 23 f4 as in D.Roiz Baztan-P.San Segundo Carrillo, Lugo 2009, because 23...Bc6! would give Black the upper hand. Instead 22 Bb3 gxf3 23 Nxf3 Qf2 24 Nxe5 Bxe5 25 Qg4 Qg3 26 Qxg3 Bxg3 27 Bf6 Kh7 28 e5 was agreed drawn J.Brueckner-E.Maubrises, correspondence 2002. After 28...Bc6 29 exd6 Kg6

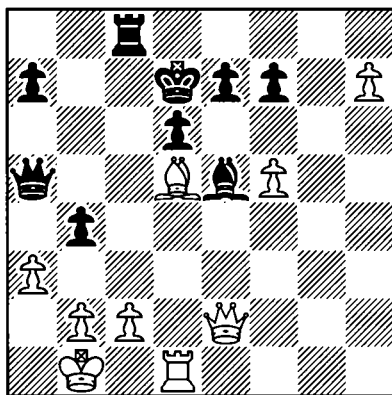
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

30 Be7 Rxe7 31 dxe7 Kf6 the endgame is not so clear.

**21...Bxf5 22 exf5 (Diagram 52)**



**Diagram 52 (B)**



**Diagram 53 (W)**

Black must tread very carefully.

**22...Rc8?**

This is a mistake. There are two alternatives:

a) 22...gxf3 has been played frequently, but Black can hardly defend himself after 23 Qxh5: for example, 23...Qf2 (or 23...Rc8 24 Bf4!) 24 Bf4 Rc8 25 Rc1! (instead 25 c3? gives Black chances to defend with 25...Rc5 or 25...Qe2) and Black has no good way to meet 26 Bxe5 followed by capturing on f7. If 25...Rc8 26 Rh1 Rc8 and now 27 c3 wins easily.

b) 22...Qc5! is the best try. Black keeps watch over the d5-bishop and prepares to attack on the c-file. White has:

b1) 23 Qxh5 Rc8 24 c3 gxf3 25 Bxe7 f2 26 f6 Qxd5 27 Rxd5 f1Q+ 28 Rd1 Qf3 29 Qxf3 1/2-1/2 H.Vera Ruiz-E.Serrano Salvador, correspondence 2008.

b2) 23 fxg4!? was suggested by Yakovich. He gives 23...hxg4 24 Bh6! Rc8 25 Bxg7 Kxg7 26 Rh1 Qe3 27 Qh4!? Rg8 28 Qxe7 with attacking chances. It looks like Black can defend himself with 28...Rh8 29 Rf1 (or 29 f6+ Kg6) 29...Qd2 when the position is not so clear, although White has a draw for the taking at almost any time.

**23 fxg4 Kf8?!**

A second error follows, but the position is already too difficult. If 23...hxg4 24 Rh1 Qc7 25 Qh7+ Kf8 26 c3 and White's attack is decisive.

*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

**24 gxh5 Qc5 25 h6 Bh8 26 h7 Ke8 27 Qe2 Kd7 28 Be3**

Also winning was 28 Bxf7 Nxf7 29 Qxe7+ Kc6 30 Qxf7 Qe5 31 Bc1.

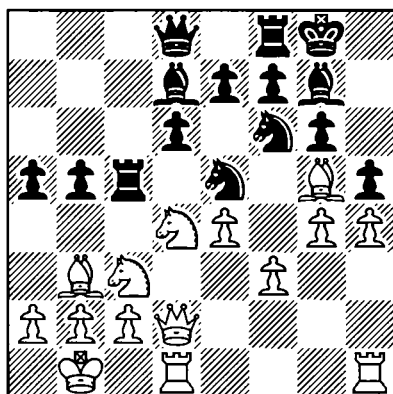
**28...Qb4 29 a3 Qa5 30 Bd4 b4?!**

This allows a cute finish.

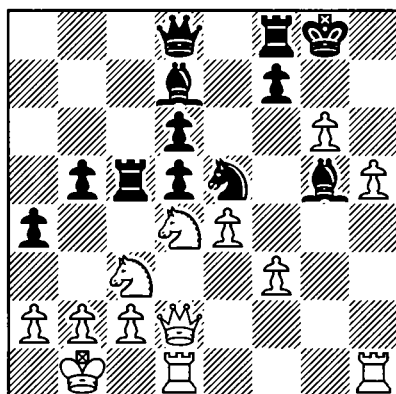
**31 Bxe5 Bxe5 (Diagram 53) 32 Qxe5! dxe5 33 Be6+ Kc6 34 Bxc8 bxa3 35 h8Q axb2 36 Qe8+ Kc5 37 Qxe7+ Kc4 38 Qxf7+ Kc5 1-0**

### *Game 8* **F.Amonatov-Le Quang Liem** Moscow 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 O-O 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 Kb1 b5 15 g4 a5 (Diagram 54)**



**Diagram 54 (W)**



**Diagram 55 (W)**

This is more consistent with 14...b5.

**16 gxh5**

White has also frequently played 16 Bxf6 to break down Black's kingside. Following 16...Bxf6 17 gxh5 a4 18 Bd5 (instead 18 hxg6 axb3 19 Nxb3 Rxc3 20 gxf7+ Kxf7 21 Qxc3 Nc4 22 Nd4 Qb6 is unclear and here Black could also try 20...Nxf7!?) 18...e6 19 hxg6 exd5 20 h5 Bg5 (**Diagram 55**) Black's kingside has been destroyed, but he is up a piece. White has:

a) 21 Qg2 Rxc3 22 bxc3 Nc4 23 Rdg1 Qa5 (better is 23...Nd2+! 24 Ka1 Qc8 25 Ne2

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Bf6 when Black's attack looks the stronger) 24 Qxg5 Qxc3 25 gxf7+ Kxf7 and here White took a draw with 26 Qxd5+ Ke8 27 Qa8+ Kf7 28 Qd5+ Ke8 in G.Wiech-M.Nizynski, Poland 1987. However, 26 Qg7+! Ke8 27 Nxb5 is winning for White: for example, 27...Qb4+ 28 Ka1 Qxb5 29 h6.

b) 21 f4 Nc4 22 Qg2 (after 22 Qh2 both 22...Bh6 23 Nxd5 Rxd5 24 exd5 Qf6 and 22...Bf6 23 Nxd5 Rxd5 24 exd5 Bxd4 25 Rxd4 Qf6 lead to unclear positions where Black has scored well in practice) 22...Ne3 23 Qxg5 Qxg5 24 fxg5 Nxd1 25 gxf7+ Rxf7 26 Rxd1 Bg4 is a very messy endgame which seems okay for Black.

### 16...a4 (Diagram 56)

This is consistent, but now White is able to use his h-pawn to good effect. 16...Nxb5 is considered in the next game.

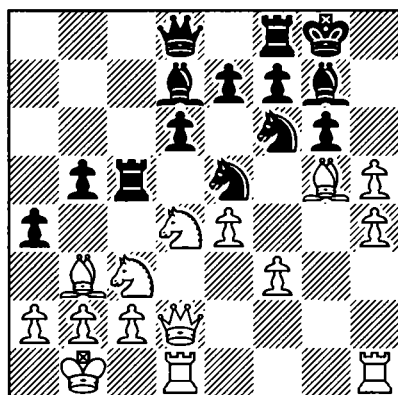


Diagram 56 (W)

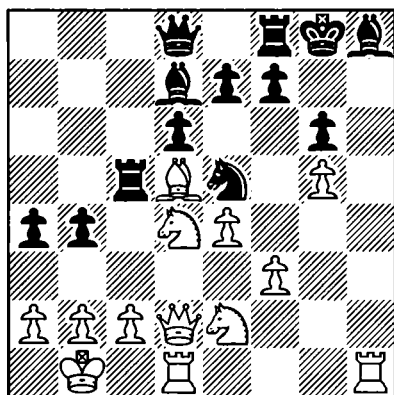


Diagram 57 (B)

### 17 h6!

The h-pawn marches along, causing distress in the black camp. Instead 17 Bxf7+ (or 17 Bd5 Nxb5 when Black defends himself and his counterattack is ready to roll) looks too optimistic. Both 17...Rxf7 18 hxg6 Nxg6 19 h5 Nxb5!, with the idea 20 Rxb5 Nf4!, and 17...Kxf7!? 18 hxg6+ Nxg6 19 h5 Ne5 20 h6 Nc4 21 Qg2 Bh8 22 h7 Qa5!, with the idea ...Qb4, are promising for Black.

### 17...Bh8 18 h7+!

The pawn gives its life at a high cost. Instead 18 Bd5 Kh7! allows Black to keep lines closed.

### 18...Nxb5

Even worse is 18...Kxh7 19 h5 Nxh5 20 Rxh5+! gxh5 21 Qh2 with a decisive attack.

### **19 Bd5 b4 20 Nce2 Nxg5**

The thematic 20...Rxd5 just does not work, as Black is unable to fight for the initiative. After 21 exd5 Nc4 22 Qxb4 Qc7 23 Nc6 Bxc6 24 Qxc4 White was up material and had the stronger attack in L.Aguero Jimenez-P.Morales Romero, Havana 2010.

### **21 hxg5 (Diagram 57) 21...e6**



**NOTE:** Sometimes there are sharp lines which transpose to one another, but there is almost always some subtle difference. This is the most common continuation, but because of the line in the note to White's next move, it has been suggested that 21...Bg7 is a better move order for Black. I have my doubts about this.

After 21...Bg7 White has:

a) 22 Nf4 gives Black the extra option of 22...Re8!?. Instead 22...e6 23 Ndx6! reaches the main game.

b) 22 f4! has been indicated in multiple sources. After 22...Nc4 23 Qd3 Qc7 (Yakovich also mentions that 23...Nxb2 24 Kxb2 e6 25 f5 exd5 26 Qh3 gives White a winning attack) 24 f5 prepares Qh3. Black's best chance looks like 24...Rxd5, but after 25 exd5 Nxb2 26 Qh3! (worse is 26 Kxb2 Bxf5 when Black is still alive) 26...Rc8 27 Qh7+ Kf8 28 Rdf1 Black will not survive.

### **22 Nf4**

Also good is 22 Rxh8+! Kxh8 23 Nf4 Kg7 (after 23...exd5? 24 Qh2+ Kg8 25 Rh1 Black is mated) 24 Bxe6! when White has a nice plus: for example, 24...Rh8 (or 24...Bc6 25 Bd5) 25 Bxd7 Qxd7 26 Nd5 and White has more than enough for the exchange.

### **22...Bg7**

This is the only way to avoid getting mated on the h-file, but White is able to strike on the light squares.

### **23 Ndx6!**

23 Nfx6 amounts to the same thing.

### **23...Bxe6 24 Nxe6 fxe6 25 Bxe6+ Nf7 (Diagram 58)**

White has two pawns and a strong initiative for the piece.

### **26 Qh2!?**

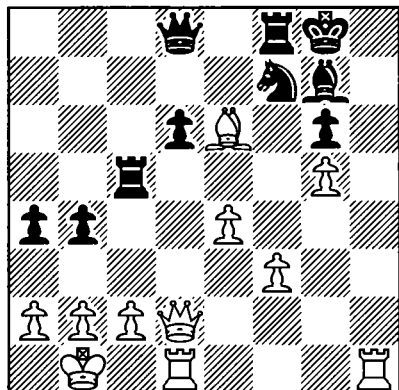
White chooses to keep the queens on the board. After 26 f4 Re8 27 Qxd6 Qxd6 28 Rxd6 Kf8 Black has scored 2-0, but White must be better:

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

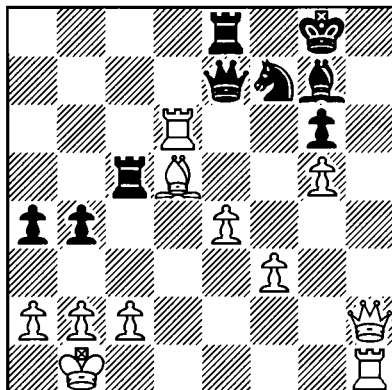
a) 29 Rb6 a3 30 b3? (30 e5!) 30...Rc3 31 Rf1 Bd4 32 Bxf7? Bxb6 33 Bxe8 Kxe8 34 Kc1 Re3 35 f5 Rxe4 36 fxg6 Bd4 0-1 H.Arppi-H.Rissanen, correspondence 1996.

b) 29 Ra6 a3 30 e5 axb2 31 Bb3? (almost anything was better than this: for example, 31 Rf1!? discourages any counter-sacrifices) 31...Nxe5 32 fxe5 Rxe5 and the tide began to turn in G.Garcia-S.Kudrin, Salamanca 1989.

**26...Re8 27 Rxd6 Qe7 28 Bd5 (Diagram 59)**



**Diagram 58 (W)**



**Diagram 59 (B)**

The position is quite scary for Black, but he should be able to defend himself.

**28...Kf8?!**

This is a big mistake. Practice has shown that Black can keep things together with 28...Qc7! and then:

a) 29 Qd2 Rc8 30 Rxc6 (perhaps the patient 30 Rh2!? could be tried) 30...Rxc2 31 Bxf7+ Qxf7 32 Rxc7 leads to an assortment of perpetual checks.

b) 29 Qh7+ Kf8 30 Rxc6 Qe5 forces 31 Rxc7 Qxc7 32 g6 Qxh7 33 gxh7 Nh8 with an unclear ending.

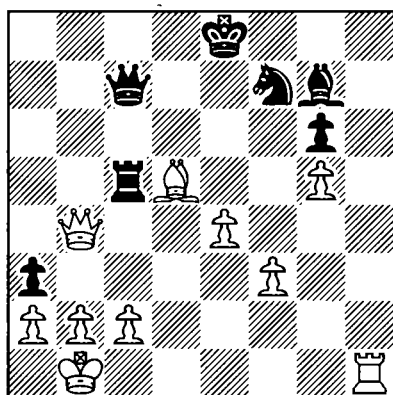
**29 Re6! Qc7 30 Rxe8+!?**

Instead 30 Qxc7 Rxc7 31 Rxc6 Rc8 32 Rh2 was much better for White in J.Barlow-G.Bennett, correspondence 1996. This is a much improved version of the end-games in the previous note.

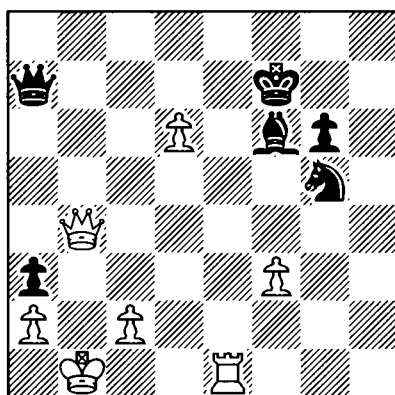
**30...Kxe8 31 Qd2**

Now it is White's turn to slip. Instead 31 f4! a3 32 Rd1! would allow White to maintain control after 32...axb2 (or 32...Bxb2 33 Qh7!) 33 e5!.

**31...a3! 32 Qxb4 (Diagram 60)**



**Diagram 60 (B)**



**Diagram 61 (W)**

**32...Bxb2?**

After this move White takes over for good. Instead 32...axb2 is not so clear. If 33 Rh7?! (better is 33 f4, although 33...Nd6 is not clear because Black has been able to activate all his pieces), 33...Qf4! suddenly threatens mate. After 34 Bxf7+ Kxf7 35 Qb7+ (or 35 Qxb2 Qe5) 35...Qc7 it is Black who is playing for an advantage.

**33 Rh7**

White wins material and only has to take care not to allow any real counterplay.

**33...Rxd5 34 exd5 Qa7 35 Rh1 Nxc5 36 Re1+ Kf7 37 d6 Bf6 (Diagram 61) 38 f4**

Instead 38 Qc4+ with the idea of exchanging queens on c7 would have won much more quickly.

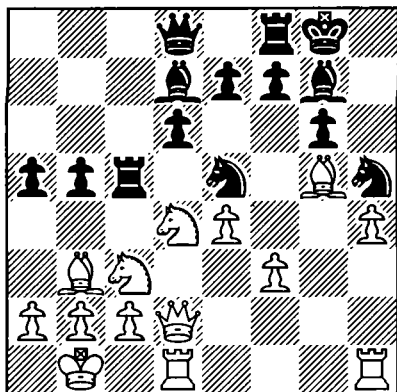
**38...Ne6 39 Qb3 Qd7 40 Qd5 Qc8 41 Kc1 Qd7 42 Kd1 Qc8 43 Re4 Qd7 44 Re3 Qc8 45 Re2 Qd7 46 Re4 Qc8 47 f5 gxf5 48 Qxf5 Qd7 49 Qd5 Qc8 50 c4 Qd7 51 c5 Be7 52 Qh5+ Kf6 53 Qe5+ Kf7 54 Qd5 Kf6 55 Kc2 Nxc5 56 Qd4+ Kg5 57 dxe7 Qc6 58 Qe5+ Kh6 59 Rh4+ Kg6 60 e8Q+ 1-0**

### *Game 9*

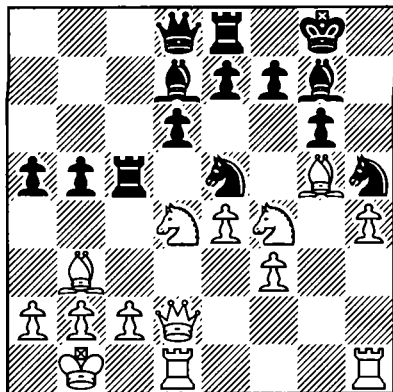
**A.Areshchenko-F.Corrales Jimenez**  
Khanty-Mansiysk 2009

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 O-O 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4**

**Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 Kb1 b5 15 g4 a5 16 gxh5 Nxh5**  
**(Diagram 62)**



**Diagram 62 (W)**



**Diagram 63 (B)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This now appears to be the most reliable continuation. Dearing was dismissive of this move, but times have changed and Yakovich considers it to be clearly best. In sharp openings like the Dragon, assessments often swing back and forth as both sides discover fresh resources.

### **17 Nd5 Re8**

It is too early for 17...Rxd5? 18 Bxd5 because Black cannot generate any threats yet, so he simply defends e7 instead.

### **18 Nf4 (Diagram 63)**

White immediately goes about breaking Black down on the kingside.

18 a3 has been played more and White has scored pretty well. After 18...Nc4 19 Qg2 Black's defensive task is not trivial:

a) 19...Kf8 20 Nf5! Bxf5 (after 20...gxf5 21 Rhg1 Ne5 22 Nf4 White's attack is very strong) 21 exf5 Qa8 had been considered to be very dangerous for Black, but some correspondence games have shown that there are sufficient resources: for example, 22 Nxe7 Nxb2! 23 f6 Nxd1 24 fxg7+ Nxg7 25 Nxg6+ fxg6 26 Rxd1 a4 27 Ba2 Rf5 28 Qd2 Qc6 reached an unclear position with chances for both sides in G.Pezzica-R.Amico, correspondence 2005.

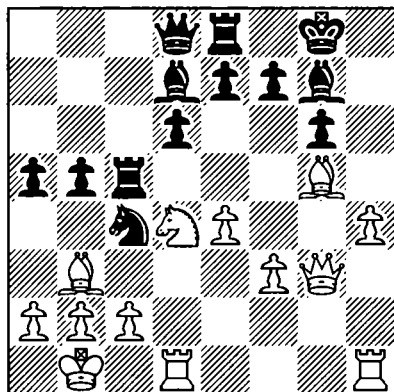
b) 19...Rxd5 is interesting: 20 exd5 Qb6 21 Qg1 (21 c3! looks more testing)



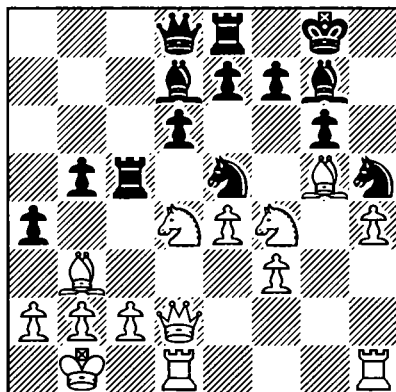
21...Nxb2! 22 Kxb2 a4 23 Ka2 (Black breaks through after 23 Ba2 b4) 23...Qc5 24 Rh2 Ra8 25 Bc1 b4 26 Bb2 bxa3 27 Ba1 was Z.Almasi-R.Polzin, Mainz (rapid) 2008. Here 27...axb3+ 28 Nxb3 Qc7 29 Bxg7 Nxg7 would leave Black with sufficient compensation for the exchange.

**18...a4!?**

The alternative is 18...Nxf4 19 Qxf4 Nc4 (hoping for 20 h5 f6) 20 Qg3! (**Diagram 64**)



**Diagram 64 (B)**



**Diagram 65 (W)**

and now:

a) 20...Qb6?! 21 h5 a4 22 Bxc4 bxc4 23 hxg6 when White's attack is the stronger. He can even play Bc1 if necessary.

b) 20...Nxb2 is less clear but White won a couple of correspondence games after 21 Kxb2 a4 22 Bxf7+ (Black has good counterplay after 22 Bd5 Qa5) 22...Kxf7 23 h5 gxh5 24 Qf4+ Kg8 and now:

b1) 25 Rhg1 Rf8 26 Qh4 Rf7 27 Kb1 Kf8 28 Be3 Qa5 29 Bd2 b4 30 Rxg7 Kxg7 31 Rg1+ Kh8 32 Bc1! when White's king proved to be safer in S.Diaz-J.Cavalcanti, correspondence 2007.

b2) 25 Bh6 e5 26 Qd2 Bf6 (26...exd4 27 Bxg7 Kxg7 28 Rdg1+ looks risky, but maybe it is just a draw) 27 Ne2 Be6 28 Rxh5 Kf7 29 Be3 when Black did not have enough for the exchange in A.Mancuso-F.Kroes, correspondence 2008.

c) 20...a4 21 Bxc4 bxc4 (after 21...Rxc4 Rogozenko suggests 22 Qg1!? with the idea of h5) 22 h5 Qa5 23 Bd2! (worse is 23 Rhg1 Rb8 24 hxg6 f6 25 Bc1 c3 when Black's attack was very strong in D.Dragicevic-R.Polzin, Pardubice 2008) 23...c3 24 Bxc3

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Rxc3 25 hxg6! and now:

c1) 25...f5? 26 Rh7 Rb8 27 Qh4 Rxb2+ 28 Kxb2 Qb4+ 29 Ka1 Bxd4 30 Rh8+ Kg7 31 Rg8+ 1-0 was A.Motylev-S.Feller, Ohrid 2009. This game was played only a month before our main game.

c2) 25...Rc5? was suggested by Golubev, but after 26 gxf7+ Kxf7 27 e5! (Black's defensive idea was 27 Rdg1 Rg5! 28 Qxg5 Qxg5 29 Rxg5 Bxd4) 27...Rxe5 28 f4 Rb5 29 Rh7 White's attack is winning.

c3) 25...Qe5 is relatively best. After 26 gxf7+ Kxf7 27 Qxe5 dxe5 28 bxc3 exd4 29 cxd4 White is certainly better in the ending, but Black has some hopes of creating counterplay with his bishop pair.

Returning to 18...a4 (**Diagram 65**):

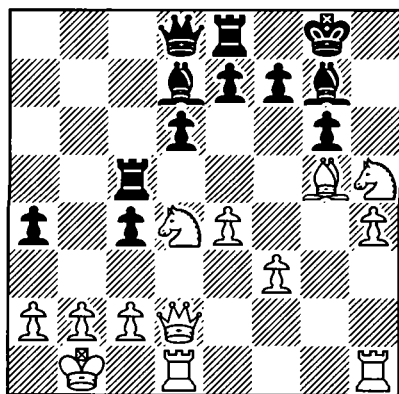
### 19 Bd5

Instead 19 Nxh5 axb3! 20 Nxb3 (or 20 Nxg7 Nxf3!) 20...Nc4 with the idea ...Bxb2 gives Black counterplay.

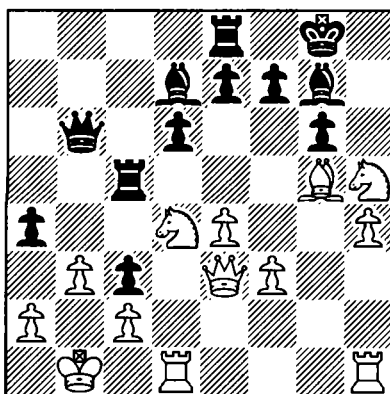
### 19...Nc4!

Worse is 19...Nf6 20 h5! e6 21 hxg6 exd5 22 Bxf6 when Black is struggling after either 22...Bxf6 23 Rdg1 or 22...Qxf6 23 Nh5 Qxg6 24 Rdg1 according to Yakovich.

### 20 Bxc4 bxc4 21 Nxh5 (**Diagram 66**)



**Diagram 66 (B)**



**Diagram 67 (B)**

### 21...c3!

Also possible is 21...gxh5 22 Rhg1 Kh7 23 Be3 c3, although here White has more options.

## 22 Qe3

This move proves to be a mistake, but that is only apparent after deep and complicated analysis. Instead 22 bxc3 gxh5 23 Rhg1 Qb6+ 24 Ka1 Kh7 25 Rb1 Qa5 26 Rb4 would remain unclear.

## 22...Qb6 23 b3 (Diagram 67) 23...gxh5

Golubev points out 23...axb3! 24 Nxb3 (White's king is also the one in trouble after 24 axb3? Ra8 or 24 cxb3 gxh5) 24...Ra8! when Black's attack is the stronger. For example, 25 Nxc7? Qa6 and Black wins.

## 24 Bh6 Bf6 25 Bg5 Bg7 26 Bh6 Bf6 27 Rhg1+?!

White decides to play for a win. This works out well, but objectively it was better to repeat moves.

## 27...Kh7 28 Qf4



**NOTE:** Even in very tactical positions, computers do not solve every problem quickly. A good example is the famous World Championship game between Kramnik and Leko. Here the text is the computer's first choice, but it turns out that this move should lose. It is already difficult to find an alternative however.

## 28...axb3 29 axb3 (Diagram 68)

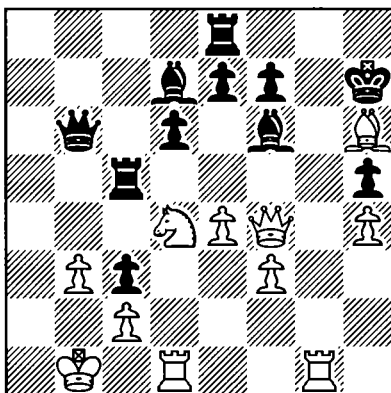


Diagram 68 (B)

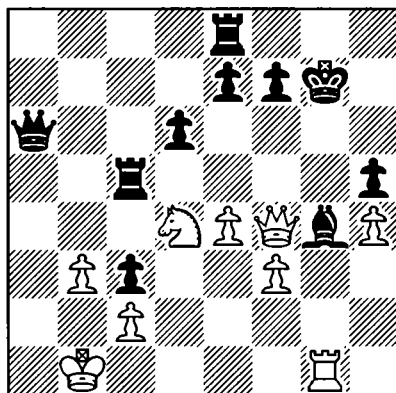


Diagram 69 (W)

## 29...Qa6?

This allows a tremendous shot. Black had two better ways to continue:

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

a) 29...Ra8 leads to a fantastic draw: 30 Bg7 Bxg7 31 Qxf7 Bg4 32 Ne6 Qxb3+! 33 cxb3 c2+ 34 Kc1 cxd1Q+ 35 Kxd1 Ra1+ 36 Kd2 Ra2+ 37 Kd1 Ra1+ with perpetual.

b) 29...Bg4! in fact wins. The key point is that after 30 fxg4 Ra8! 31 Bf8 Rg5! Black keeps the g-file closed.

**30 Bg7! Bxg7 31 Rxg7+ Kxg7 32 Rg1+ Bg4 (Diagram 69) 33 Ne6+!**

It is difficult to understand this move at first, but the obvious 33 fxg4 allows 33...e6 when the black king can run with ...Kf8-e7.

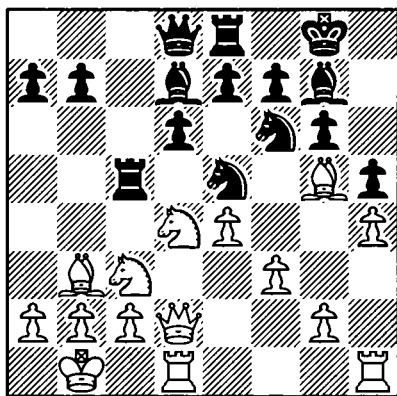
**33...Kg6**

Now 33...fxe6 34 fxg4 wins quickly.

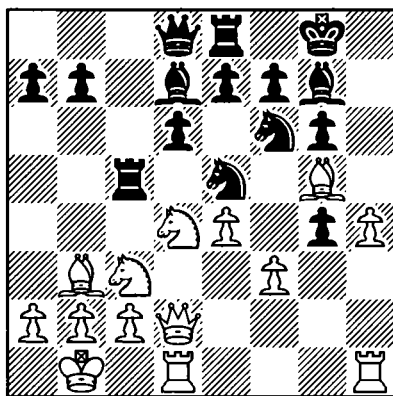
**34 fxg4 f6 35 Nxc5 dxc5 36 g5 Qa3 37 gxf6+ Kf7 38 fxe7+ 1-0**

### Game 10 T.Radjabov-M.Carlsen Baku 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 Kb1 Re8 (Diagram 70)**



**Diagram 70 (W)**



**Diagram 71 (W)**

Black also makes a useful prophylactic move. Overprotecting e7 gives Black's queen more freedom and he will not necessarily have to rush to sacrifice the exchange in the event of White's Nc3-d5. There is a potential drawback to this move, however, as the defence of f7 is weakened.



**NOTE: Even though 14...b5 leads to exciting play, these days 14...Re8 looks more reliable.**

## **15 g4**

White plays for the direct attack, but here Black is a little better prepared for the assault. Others:

a) 15 Bh6 is actually the most common move. Usually Black replies with 15...Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 which transposes to Game 13. Black has a decent alternative, however, in 15...Qa5 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Rhe1 b5! which has held up pretty well.

b) White has never proven much with the 'central' approaches: 15 Rhe1 Qa5 (Black has also scored well with 15...Qc8 and 15...b5) 16 a3 (after 16 f4 Nc4 17 Bxc4 Rxc4 White achieves little after 18 Nb3 Qa6 19 e5 Ng4! or 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Nd5 Qxd2 20 Nxf6+ exf6 21 Rxd2 f5!) and now rather than 16...b5?! 17 Bxf6! as in V.Anand-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 17), New York 1995, Black has done pretty well with 16...Qa6!.

c) 15 f4 has been seen in a couple of high-level games recently. After 15...Nc4 16 Qd3 Qc8 17 f5 Black has:

c1) 17...Ne5 18 Qe2 gxf5 19 Nxf5 Bxf5 20 exf5 Rxc3 21 bxc3 Qxf5 22 Rd4 Rc8 23 Rh3 Qg6 24 Rg3 and White had the initiative in A.Areshchenko-F.Amonatov, St Petersburg 2010.

c2) 17...gxf5! 18 exf5 Ne5 19 Qe2 Neg4 20 Rhf1 Rxc3! 21 bxc3 Qxc3 22 Bc1 a5 23 Bb2 Qe3 24 Rde1 Qxe2 25 Rxe2 a4 26 Bc4 Ne5 27 Bb5 Rc8 28 Bxd7 Nfxd7 gave Black excellent compensation for the exchange in the endgame in L.Dominguez Perez-T.Radjabov, Linares 2009.

## **15...hxg4 (Diagram 71) 16 h5?!**



**NOTE: Even the world's best players can mix up their lines! Here Radjabov plays an obvious and thematic move, but Black is well placed to meet White's pawn sacrifices.**

Also of questionable value is 16 Bxf6?! Bxf6 17 h5 g5. The best move is 16 f4 which is considered in the next game.

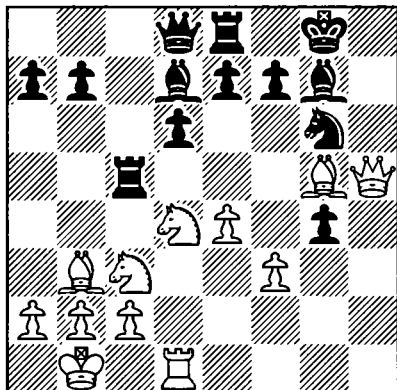
## **16...Nxb5 17 Rxb5**

White is consistent. With a couple of pawns in the bank Black is happy to meet 17 Nd5 with 17...Rxd5, while 17 Bh6 e6 defends and 17 f4 could be met with the typical 17...Nc4 18 Qd3 b5 or even 17...Nc6!?

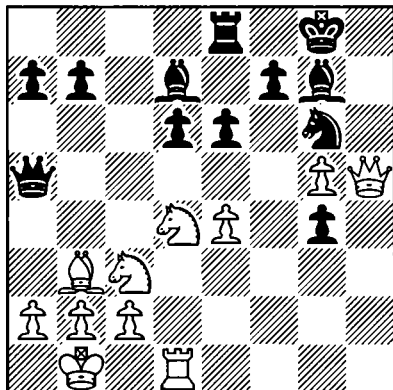
**17...gxh5 18 Qh2 Ng6**

This is the most sensible reply. The counterattack with 18...Rxc3?! 19 bxc3 a5 is too slow after 20 Qxh5 a4? 21 Rh1 and White arrives first. Instead 18...Nxf3 19 Nxf3 gxf3 20 Qxh5 e6 is a typical idea which uses the pin along the fifth rank, but 21 Nd5! gives White a dangerous attack.

**19 Qxh5 (Diagram 72)**



**Diagram 72 (B)**



**Diagram 73 (W)**

**19...Qa5!?**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT: Black is rightly ambitious.**

That said, there was also nothing wrong with 19...Rxc3 20 Qxc3 e6 21 Qxc3 Qf6 when Black had a very comfortable position in T.Glimbrant-M.Pavlovic, Barbera del Valles 1994. Black's king is quite safe and he has the bishop pair.

**20 f4**

Black's tactical point is that 20 Qxc3 e6! picks up the g5-bishop and ends White's attack. Instead 20 Nd5 is tempting, but Black has no problems after 20...e6 and then:

- a) 21 Nf5 fails to 21...Rxd5! 22 Bxd5 exf5 23 Qxc3 Qxd5! 24 Qxc3+ Kxc3 as given by Carlsen.
- b) 21 Rh1 exd5 22 Qh7+ Kf8 23 Bh6 Bxh6 24 Qxh6+ Ke7 25 Qg5+ f6!? (Black can

also acquiesce to a draw with 25...Kf8) 26 Qxg6 dxe4 when Black is up a significant amount of material, although he clearly must take some care with his king.

**20...Rxc3**

Sacrificing the exchange back the other way is worse. After 20...Rxc3 21 bxc3 Qxc3 22 Bxf7+! Kxf7 23 f5 White can hardly be worse.

**21 fxg5 e6 (Diagram 73) 22 Nf5?**

This just does not work. Better was 22 Qxg4, although with the bishop pair and the better structure Black stands well.

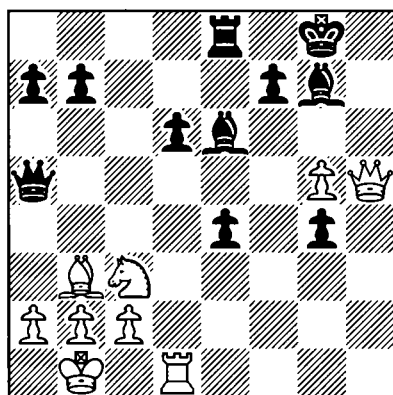
**22...exf5 23 Qxg6**

If 23 Rxd6 Rxe4! exploits White's weak back rank.

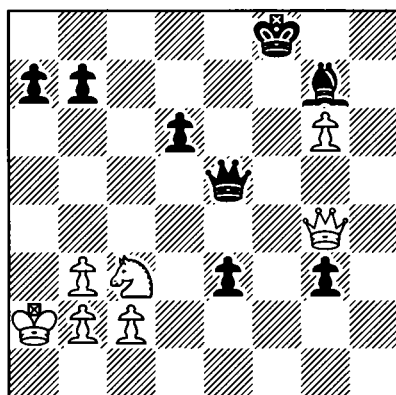
**23...Be6 24 Qh5**

White tries to keep matters complicated because 24 Bxe6 Rxe6 25 Qxf5 Bxc3! forces him into a bad rook ending.

**24...fxe4 (Diagram 74)**



**Diagram 74 (W)**



**Diagram 75 (B)**

**25 Rf1**

The pressure against f7 proves to be illusory. After 25 Bxe6 Rxe6 26 Rf1 Carlsen gives 26...Rf6, while 26...Bf6 looks good too. The best try was 25 Nd5 e3 26 g6 Kf8! 27 gxf7 Bxf7 28 Rf1 Qe1+! 29 Rxe1 Bxh5 30 Rf1+ Bf7 31 Nxe3 Rxe3 32 Rxf7+ Ke8 (Carlsen) when Black's strong g-pawn leaves him with the upper hand.

**25...Qe5**

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

Now Black is winning.

### **26 Rxf7 Bxb3**

Cleaner was 26...Rf8! 27 Rxf8+ (Black runs away after 27 Rxd7+ Kxd7 28 Qh6+ Kf7) 27...Kxf8 28 Bxe6 Qxe6 with a winning position.

### **27 axb3 g3 28 Ka2!?**

This move could be considered to be dubious, but White is lost in any case and at least this sets a trap. Instead 28 Rxb7 Rf8 29 Qe2 leaves Black with several good continuations, one being 29...Qf5 30 Ka2 d5.

### **28...Rf8!**

Carlsen is alert. The tempting 28...g2? is met with 29 Rf2! g1Q 30 Qf7+ and White delivers perpetual check.

### **29 Rxf8+ Kxf8 30 Qg4 e3 31 g6 (Diagram 75) 31...e2?**

But this is a big slip. Instead 31...Bf6 32 Qd7 Qe7 33 Qc8+ Kg7 34 Qh3 Bxc3 35 bxc3 Kxg6 should win, while Carlsen gives 31...Ke7 (31...Ke8 is similar) 32 Qc8 e2 33 Qxb7+ Kf6 34 Nxe2 Qxe2 35 Qf7+ Kg5 36 Qxg7 g2 37 Qd4 Qa6+ 38 Kb1 Qf1+ 39 Ka2 g1Q, winning.

### **32 Qf3+?**

Radjabov misses his chance. 32 Qd7! draws: for example, 32...Kg8 33 Qc8+ Bf8 34 Qxb7 Be7 35 Nxe2 Qxe2 36 Qd5+ Kg7 37 Qf7+ Kh6 38 g7 g2 39 g8Q and Black has to repeat with 39...Qa6+ 40 Kb1 Qf1+.

### **32...Ke8**

Now Black is winning again.

### **33 Qf7+**

After 33 Qxe2 Qxe2 34 Nxe2 g2 35 c3 Ke7 Black wins easily.

**33...Kd8 34 Qg8+ Kd7 35 Qf7+ Qe7 36 Qf5+ Kd8 37 Qa5+ b6 38 Qd5 e1Q 39 Qa8+ Kd7 40 Qb7+ Ke8 0-1**

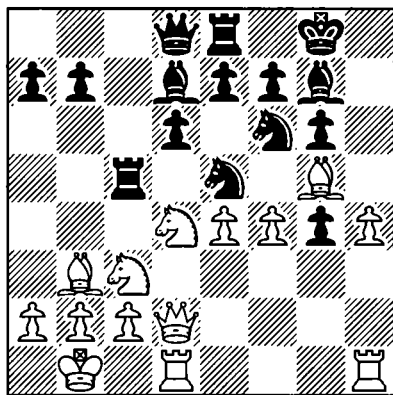
## **Game 11 A.Nikolova-D.Vocaturro Bratto 2009**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 Kb1 Re8 15 g4 hxg4 16 f4 (Diagram 76)**

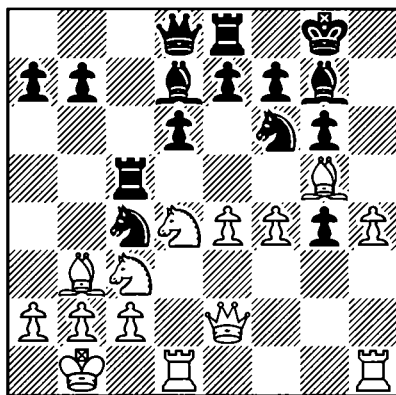


This is more challenging. White limits his investment to one pawn.

**16...Nc4 17 Qe2 (Diagram 77)**



**Diagram 76 (B)**



**Diagram 77 (B)**

White has not had success with the alternative 17 Qd3. After 17...Qc8 18 Bxf6 (here 18 f5?! would be met by 18...Ne5 when White has trouble defending both f5 and c3) 18...Bxf6 he has tried:

a) 19 Nd5 Bg7 20 h5 e6 21 Nc3 gxh5 22 f5 exf5 23 exf5 Re3 24 Qf1 Rxc3 25 bxc3 Ne3 gave Black a winning position in D.Dragicevic-D.Vocaturu, Gaziantep 2008.

b) 19 h5 g5! 20 fxg5 (or 20 Nd5 gxf4 21 Nxf6+ exf6 22 Rdf1 d5 23 Rxf4 Rxe4 24 Rxf6 Qe8 25 Qd1? Qe5 0-1 J.Rudd-G.Jones, Liverpool 2008) 20...Bxg5 21 Nd5 Ne5 22 Qg3 Kh8!? gave Black a good position in R.Marek-A.Kristjansson, correspondence 2009.

**17...Qc8!**



**NOTE:** This is a typical move in the Soltis Variation. The queen creates pressure on the c-file and also covers the f5-square.

**18 f5 Nxb2!**

This is a typical shot and the best move. White had a strong attack after 18...gxf5 19 exf5 Ne5 20 Bxf6! Bxf6 21 Ne4 in R.Pruijssers-A.Pijpers, Groningen 2009, while 18...Na3+ is a worse version of the game continuation, as White has an extra pawn on a3 and his king is safer on b1 than b2. After 19 bxa3 Rxc3 20 fxg6 Rxb3+ 21 axb3 (also promising is 21 cxb3 fxg6 22 Rc1) 21...fxg6 22 Qd3 Nh5 23 Rhf1 Black did not have enough for the exchange in A.Motylev-P.Carlsson, Plovdiv 2008.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

### 19 Kxb2

White could also consider 19 fxg6 Nxd1 and now:

a) 20 gxf7+ Kh7! 21 Nxd1 Rf8 favours Black.

b) 20 Bxf7+!? Kf8 21 Nxd1 with the idea h5-h6 was suggested by Jones, but perhaps Black should prefer 20...Kh8!? 21 Nxd1 Rf8 with the idea of taking on f7. If 22 Bb3?! Qe8! and 23 h5? is not possible because of 23...Rxc3.

### 19...Rxc3 20 fxg6 Rxb3+ 21 axb3?!

After this White is worse. Better was 21 cxb3 fxg6 22 Rc1 with an unclear position.

### 21...fxg6 22 c3 Qc5 23 Rhe1 Rc8 24 Qd2 a5 (Diagram 78)

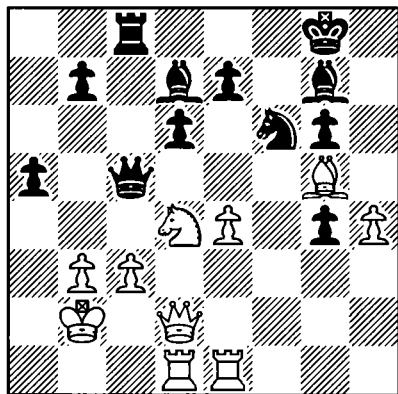


Diagram 78 (W)

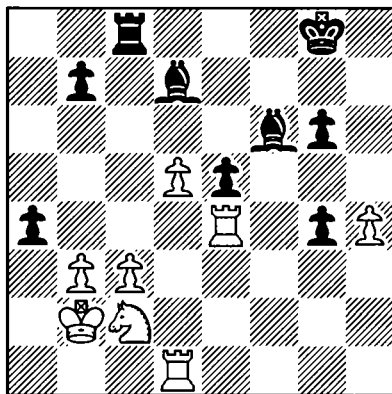


Diagram 79 (B)

Black's initiative is growing.

### 25 Rc1 a4 26 Bh6?!

White should probably try 26 bxa4, but the position remains very uncomfortable.

### 26...Bh8?!

Better was 26...e5! when the d4-knight has trouble finding a good square. After 27 Bxg7 Kxg7 28 Nc2 (28 Ne2 Nxe4) 28...axb3 29 Nb4 (or 29 Kxb3 Qc4+ 30 Kb2 Nxe4) 29...Be6 Black has another pawn and White's position is falling apart.

### 27 Qg5 Qxg5 28 Bxg5 e5

Better was 28...axb3.

### 29 Nc2 Be6?!

Again, Black should take on b3: 29...axb3 30 Nb4 Rc4 31 Bxf6 Bxf6 32 Red1 Bxh4 33

*Soltis Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5*

Rxd6 Be8 still leaves Black with some chances.

**30 Rcd1! d5**

Now Black will be much worse. Instead 30...axb3 31 Rxd6 Kf7 32 Nb4 Bc4 33 Nd5 Nxd5 34 exd5 Ra8 35 Rd7+ Kg8 36 Ra1 also leaves White clearly better. However, 30...Bxb3 was possible. After 31 Rxd6 Rf8 both sides have their chances.

**31 Bxf6 Bxf6 32 exd5 Bd7 33 Re4 (Diagram 79)**

All of Black's compensation has melted away.

**33...axb3 34 Ne3 Bf5 35 Rc4**

Jones suggests 35 Nxg4! Bg7 36 Nf2! Bxe4 37 Nxe4 when the knight dominates.

**35...Rxc4 36 Nxc4 Bxh4 37 d6 g3 38 d7?!**

This leads to a quick draw. White still had chances to win with 38 Nxe5.

**38...Bxd7 39 Rxd7 g2 40 Rd1 Bf2 41 Nxe5 g1Q 42 Rxd1 Bxd1 43 Nxg6 Bh2 44 Ne7+ Kf7 45 Nd5 Ke6 46 Ne3 Bg1 47 Nc4 Kd5 48 Kxb3 b5 49 Na3 Kc5 50 c4 bxc4+ 51 Nxc4 ½-½**

## Conclusion

The Soltis Variation is holding up pretty well theoretically. The immediate 13 g4 is premature, Black's position is pretty solid after 13 Kb1, and the straightforward 13 Bh6 should be met by 13...Nc4 rather than 13...Bxh6. The main line is deservedly 13 Bg5 Rc5. Here 14 g4 should give Black no problems theoretically. More dangerous is 14 Kb1 when 14...b5 hangs by a thread but remains playable. Instead 14...Re8 is simpler and has held up very well.

## Chapter Two

# Modern Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1 (Diagram 1)

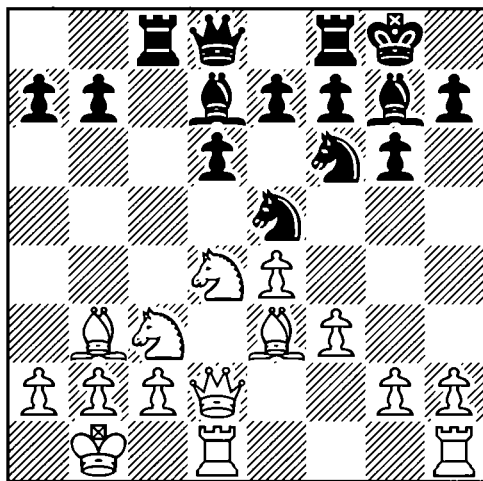


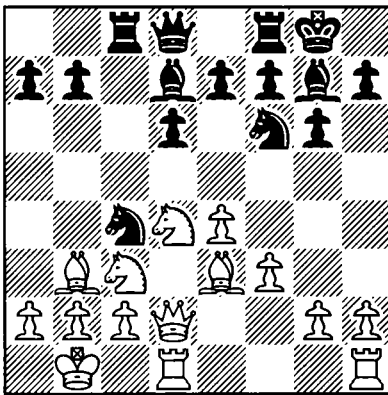
Diagram 1 (B)

This variation has caused some real headaches for the Dragon player. Black can now play the direct 12...Nc4, as seen in Game 12, or he can play a waiting move of

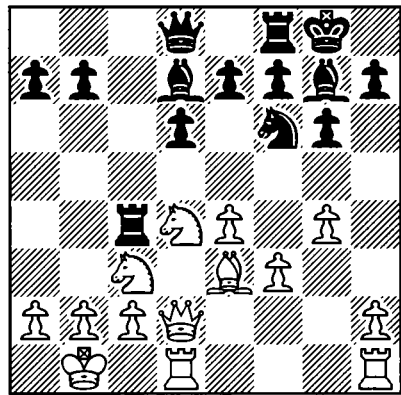
his own. In the following two games we look at Black's typical waiting move 12...Re8. After 13 h4 h5 we have a position that obviously resembles the Soltis Variation. White can then choose between the positional 14 Bh6 of Game 13 or the more dangerous 14 g4 of Game 14, which constitutes a serious threat to the viability of Black's position. In Game 15 we look at Carlsen's pet line 12...a6. While 12 Kb1 almost always helps White, it is less clear that these waiting moves will really benefit Black, especially when the position heats up, and 12 Kb1 remains a dangerous weapon against the Dragon.

*Game 12*  
**B.Bok-I.Cheparinov**  
Biel 2011

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1 Nc4 (Diagram 2)**



**Diagram 2 (W)**



**Diagram 3 (B)**

This is the most natural move and we have seen that Black reaches a decent position with the moves h4 and ...h5 thrown in. In this position, however, everything is much different.

**13 Bxc4 Rxc4 14 g4! (Diagram 3)**

White has a tremendous score from this position. Advancing the g-pawn first means that Black has to be concerned with not only the typical h4-h5 plans, but g4-g5 can cause trouble as well.

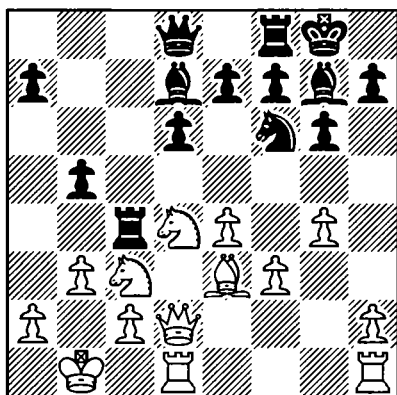
### **14...b5**

Dearing considered this move to be dubious, but it has been by far the most popular and scores pretty much as well (or I should say as badly) as anything else.

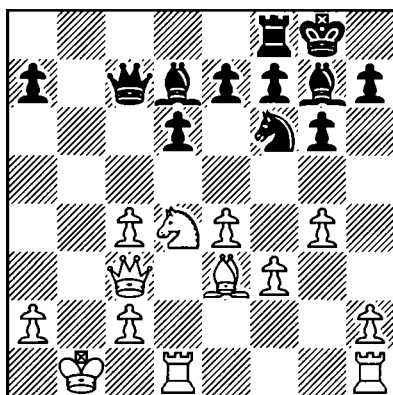
Black's main hopes of the salvation of 12...Nc4 are connected with this move and the coming sacrifice.

Alternatives do not inspire. Slow moves such as 14...Re8 and 14...a6 are well met by 15 h4. If Black tries to activate his queen he is likely to just get pushed back: for example, 14...Qc5 (or 14...Qc7) 15 g5 Nh5 16 Nd5! (another point to 12 Kb1 – Black must retreat because exchanging on d2 would allow Nxe7+) 16...Qd8 17 Ne2 intending Ng3.

### **15 b3! (Diagram 4)**



**Diagram 4 (B)**



**Diagram 5 (W)**

This is the key move for White. We have already seen this counterintuitive move in Game 2 and here it is even more effective.

It is too early to take the pawn, because 15 Ndx b5 is well met by 15...Qb8!: for example, 16 Nd4 Rfc8 17 Ka1 Bxg4 18 fxg4 Nxe4 19 Qe2 (if 19 Nxe4 Rxc2) 19...Rxc3 20 bxc3 Nxc3 21 Qd2 Qa8! (with the idea ...Qd5) 22 Qd3 e5! 23 Rdf1 (23 Nb3 e4 gives Black a winning attack) 23...exd4 24 Bf4 Qd5 25 Kb2 Rb8+ 0-1 A.Shchekachev-M.Golubev, Dimitrovgrad 1988.

After the text, already Black needs to resort to drastic measures.

### **15...b4!?**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This idea of Golubev's is Black's best practical chance. Black sacrifices the exchange and a pawn.

The most common move is actually 15...Rc8, but White can now safely grab the pawn with 16 Ndx b5. Black has scored horrendously after both 16...a6 17 Nd4 Qc7 18 Nde2 and 16...Qa5 when White has done very well with both 17 a4 and 17 Nd5.



**WARNING:** 15...Rc5? 16 Ne6! wins material for no compensation – a trap that has caught out dozens of players, including several grandmasters!

### **16 bxc4**

White can back out with 16 Nce2, but this looks far less challenging. Now 16...Rc8 17 Qxb4 a5 is reasonable, but in practice Black has preferred 16...Rc7 and then:

a) 17 Qxb4? e5 18 Nb5 Rb7 19 a4 a6 wins a piece.

b) 17 Ng3 Rc3 18 Bh6 Bxh6 19 Qxh6 e5! gave Black good play in P.Negi-P.Carlsson, Wijk aan Zee 2008.

c) 17 g5 Ne8 (Black's knight is pushed back to an unusual square, but it can aim for c3 and White will find it difficult to bother the black king) 18 Nc1 Rc3 19 a4 Qa5 20 Nde2 Nc7! 21 Nxc3 bxc3 22 Qe1 Bxa4! and Black broke through in E.Vovsha-B.Smith, U.S. League (internet) 2009.

d) 17 Bh6 Bxh6 18 Qxh6 e5 (18...a5 and 18...Rc5 are alternatives) 19 Nf5 gxf5? (this is too dangerous, so Loetscher suggests 19...Bxf5 20 gxf5 Qe7 21 h4 Rfc8 22 Rd2 Nh5) 20 Rxd6! Ne8? 21 gxf5 Qe7 22 Rg1+ Kh8 23 Rg7! was winning for White in J.Hirneise-R.Loetscher, Boeblinger Open 2010.

### **16...bxc3 17 Qxc3 Qc7 (Diagram 5)**

Black has sacrificed a significant amount of material – an exchange and a pawn. In return all his pieces are active, his king is safer, and he can take aim at the weak c4-pawn. This seems a bit sketchy but Black's position is the easier to play and there are some tricks...

### **18 Kc1?!**

The b-file is opened so White moves his king. This is a logical idea, but the timing is important. It is difficult to decide if the king should head towards the centre or into the corner. Moving to a1 looks dangerous because of the long reach of the Dragon bishop, but moving to c1 makes it more difficult for White to get his rooks to the open b-file. There are several possibilities and a lot of room for exploration:

a) 18 Ka1 Rc8 19 Rb1 Be8! is a thematic idea; Black prepares ...Nd7.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

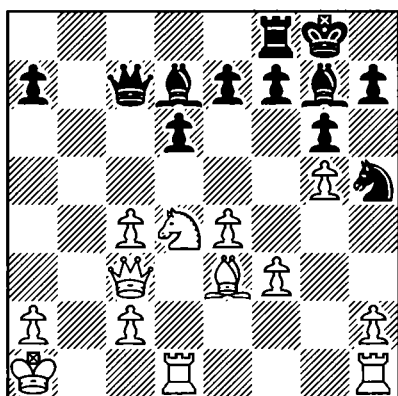
b) 18 Bc1 was seen in A.Greet-G.Jones, Torquay 2009. Now 18...Rb8+ 19 Ka1 Be6 looks reasonable, while Jones suggests the immediate 18...Be6 with the idea 19 Nxe6? Rb8+ 20 Bb2 fxe6 when White has problems on the long diagonal.

c) 18 h4 is natural. Black could try 18...Rb8+ 19 Ka1 Be8 20 h5 Nd7 with the idea 21 Rb1 Rc8 or block the kingside with 18...h5 19 g5 Nh7 intending ..Rc8 and ...Nf8-e6.

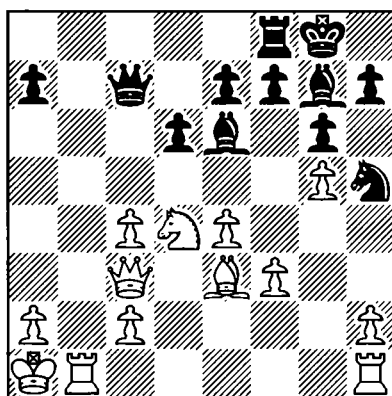
d) 18 g5! is considered best. After 18...Nh5 (18...Rb8+ basically loses a tempo because White will take the b-file: for example, 19 Ka1 Ne8 20 Rb1 Rc8 21 Rb4 a5 22 Rb2 when White is better after either 22...Qxc4 23 Qxc4 Rxc4 24 Rd1 or 22...d5 23 exd5 Nd6 24 c5! Qxc5 25 Qxc5 Rxc5 26 Rb8+ Be8 27 Rc1 Rxd5 28 c3 according to Khalifman) White has:

d1) 19 Kc1 Rc8 (19...Be5 is also possible) 20 Qd3 Be5 21 h4 Nf4 (Stocek suggests 21...Rb8 with compensation) 22 Bxf4 Bxf4+ 23 Kb2 Be5 (Black has good play after 23...Rb8+ 24 Ka1 Rb4) 24 c3 Qa5 25 Rb1 Qa4 26 Ka1 a5?! (26...Rxc4) 27 Rb3 Kg7?! 28 Kb2 Rxc4? 29 Ra3 Rxd4 30 cxd4 Bxd4+ 31 Kb1 Qb4+ 32 Rb3 and by now White was much better in B.Socko-J.Stocek, German League 2006.

d2) 19 Ka1 is more critical (**Diagram 6**).



**Diagram 6 (B)**



**Diagram 7 (B)**

White's king looks at risk on the long diagonal, but he hopes to seize the initiative by quickly getting his rooks to the b-file. Black has tried a few things here:

d21) 19...Be5 20 Rb1 Rc8 21 Rb2 Qxc4 22 Qxc4 Rxc4 23 Rd1 Ba4 24 Rd2 Nf4 25 Kb1 was V.Nithander-J.Magnusson, Swedish League 2008. Black's play looks insufficient for a whole exchange.

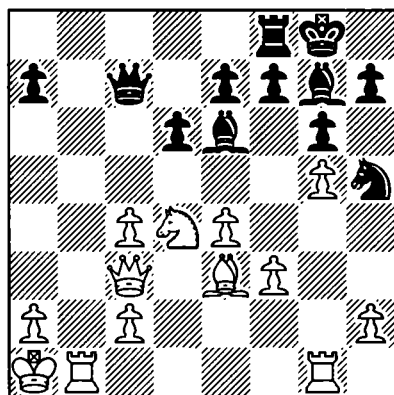


d22) 19...Be6 20 Rb1 (**Diagram 7**) 20...Rc8!? 21 Rb4 d5!? is an important idea.

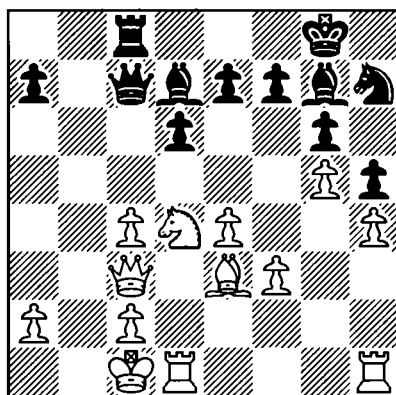


**TIP:** While it is a good plan to gang up on the c4-pawn, Black should be careful with the timing of its capture because White will usually welcome simplifications. Indeed, both 20...Qxc4 21 Qxc4 Bxc4 22 Rb7 and 20...Bxc4 21 Rb4 Rc8 22 Rhb1 see White activating his rooks and taking over the initiative.

d23) 19...Bh3!? is a fascinating refinement. Black threatens ...Bg2xf3 and this is a bit of a distraction: 20 Rhg1 (Black has active play after 20 Rb1 Bg2 or 20 Bf2 Nf4, while 20 Rhe1 Rc8 21 Rb1 Bg2 is rather annoying for White) 20...Be6! 21 Rb1 (**Diagram 8**) 21...d5!? ('Now Black's idea of inserting ...Bh3 and Rg1 becomes clear. White's h-pawn is hanging.' – Loetscher; Black could also consider 21...Rc8) 22 Qd2 (instead 22 c5!? dxe4 23 fxe4 Qxh2 is more critical according to Loetscher) 22...dxe4 23 fxe4 Bxc4 (Black has good compensation for the material) 24 Rb4 Ba6! (not 24...Rd8?! 25 Qc3) 25 c3 and now instead of the 25...Be5 26 Rgb1! of J.Heiduczek-R.Loetscher, Boeblinger 2010, Black should play 25...Rd8!. Here Loetscher gives 26 Qc2 (Black is doing well after 26 Qb2 Nf4 27 Bxf4 Qxf4 28 Re1 Qxg5) 26...Nf4 27 Rd1 e5! when White should force the draw by playing 28 Nb5 (28 Bxf4?! exf4 already looks slightly better for Black) 28...Rxd1+ 29 Qxd1 Bxb5 30 Rxb5 Qxc3+ 31 Kb1 Qxe3 32 Rb8+ Bf8 33 Rxf8+ Kxf8 34 Qd8+.



**Diagram 8 (B)**



**Diagram 9 (W)**

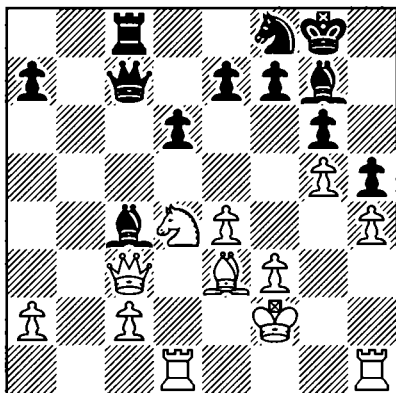
Now we return to 18 Kc1:

**18...Rc8 19 h4 h5 20 g5 Nh7 (Diagram 9)**

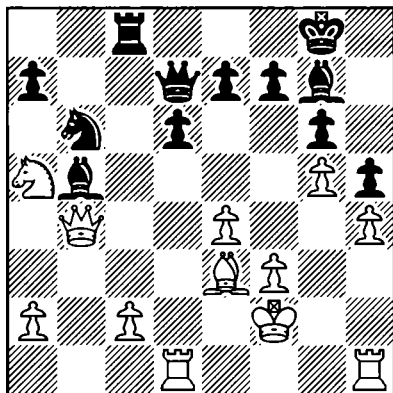
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

The knight looks bad here, but the kingside is closed and Black intends ...Nf8 when the knight will re-enter the game via d7 or e6. It is much easier for Black to improve his position than it is for White.

**21 Kd2 Be6 22 Ke2 Bxc4+ 23 Kf2 Nf8 (Diagram 10)**



**Diagram 10 (W)**



**Diagram 11 (W)**

Black has good compensation for the exchange. The b-file is not of much use and White's king will not find total safety anywhere on the board.

**24 Qa3 Nd7 25 Nb3 Nb6 26 Na5**

White is fighting for the c4-square, but the knight is not well placed here.

**26...Bb5 27 Qb4 Qd7! (Diagram 11)**

The black queen protects the bishop and keeps an eye looking at the kingside.

**28 Bd4**

Black is much better after 28 Qb1? Na4 or 28 Rc1? Bc3 29 Qa3 Ba4 when the a5-knight is in trouble. White can exchange knights with 28 c4 Nxc4 29 Nxc4 Rxc4, but then Black is only down the exchange for a pawn while keeping a much better position.

**28...Rxc2+ 29 Rd2**

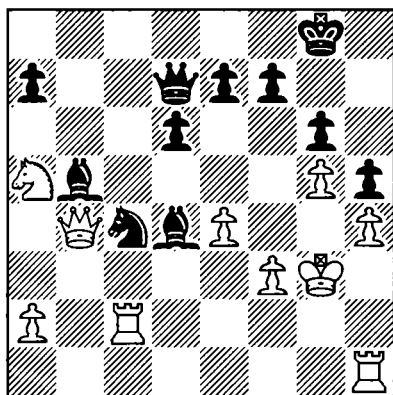
If 29 Kg3 Be2! is very strong: for example, 30 Bxg7 Bxf3! wins, as ...Qg4+ is too hard to deal with. This idea will be a recurring theme in the game.

**29...Nc4**

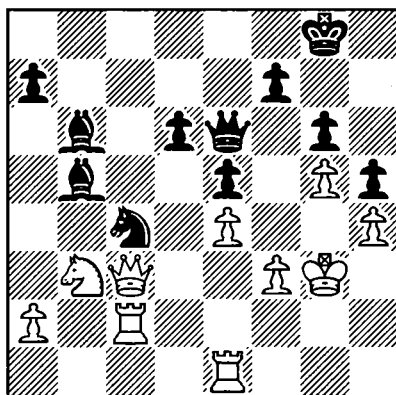
After this move Black should probably be willing to acquiesce to a draw. Instead

29...Bxd4+ 30 Qxd4 and then 30...Qc7 or 30...Rc7 were decent alternatives.

**30 Rxc2 Bxd4+ 31 Kg3 (Diagram 12)**



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (W)**

**31...Bc5?!**

Down two exchanges, Black spurns a repetition of moves with 31...Be5+ 32 Kf2 Bd4+.

**32 Qc3 Ne3**

Black does not really have enough after 32...Nxa5 33 Qxa5.

**33 Rb2 e5 34 Nb3 Bb6 35 Re1 Nc4 36 Rc2 Qe6 (Diagram 13) 37 Qb4**

I can imagine both sides were getting low on time by this point and the mistakes start to creep in. White would have good winning chances after 37 a4! Bd7 (better than 37...Bxa4 38 Qxc4 or 37...Ba6 38 a5) 38 Rh1 Ne3 39 Re2 when the e3-knight is stuck. After 39...Bxa4 40 Rxe3 Bxe3 41 Qxe3 Bxb3 42 Qxa7 White should be able to convert.

**37...Bd7 38 Rh2**

Now 38 Rh1 Ne3 gives Black good play. After 39 Re2 he can repeat the position with 39...Nf1+ 40 Kg2 Ne3+ or play for more with 39...f5!.

**38...Be3?!**

Black tries to get the bishop into the attack. This is natural but not best. Other tries:

a) 38...Ne3 39 Qd2 (Black has good compensation after 39 Qc3 f5! 40 gxf6 Qxf6 41

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Rxe3 Qf4+ 42 Kg2 Bxe3) 39...f5 40 gxf6 Qxf6 41 Rxe3 Qf4+ 42 Kg2 Qxe3 (42...Bxe3 43 Qxd6 is no better) 43 Qxe3 Bxe3 44 Rh1 when White is better in the endgame.

b) 38...a5! 39 Qc3 a4 40 Nd2 (or 40 Rc1 Ne3 with the idea ...f5; then 41 Qb4!? looks forced, but 41...Ng4! is totally unclear) 40...Ba5 41 Qxc4 Bxd2 42 Rc1 (similar is 42 Qf1 Bf4+ 43 Kg2 Bxh2 44 Kxh2 Qxa2+) 42...Bf4+ 43 Kg2 Bxc1 44 Qxc1 Qxa2+ and Black has good chances.

### 39 Rhh1

Another idea is 39 Rxe3!? Nxe3 40 Kf2.

**39...Bf4+ 40 Kf2 a5 41 Nxa5 Nd2 42 Re2 Nxf3 (Diagram 14)**

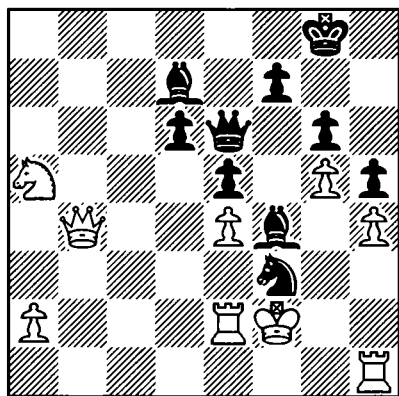


Diagram 14 (W)

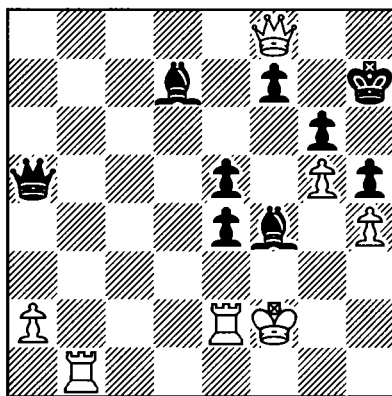


Diagram 15 (B)

White's king looks like it is in trouble, but he has a strong response.

**43 Qb3! d5 44 Kxf3 Qa6?!**

Instead 44...Qg4+ 45 Kf2 leads nowhere, but 44...Ba4! keeps Black in the game: for example, 45 Qxa4 Qg4+ 46 Kf2 Qg3+ 47 Kf1 Qf3+ with a draw.

**45 Kf2! Qxa5 46 Rb1?!**

White should play 46 exd5, even though matters are not so simple after 46...Bg4.

**46...dxe4 47 Qb8+ Kh7 48 Qf8 (Diagram 15) 48...Qd5??**

A terrible blunder. Instead 48...Qa7+ 49 Kg2 Bh3+!? (this should lead to a draw; Black could also play the immediate 49...Bg4 with further complications) 50 Kh1 (50 Kxh3 Qd7+ 51 Kg2 Qg4+ is a draw) 50...Bg4 51 Rf2 e3 52 Rb8! Qxb8! 53 Qxb8 exf2 (with the idea of mate with ...Bf3) 54 Kg2 Be3 55 Qb5 e4 gives Black good winning chances, so here White should take a draw with 53 Qxf7+ Kh8 54 Qf6+

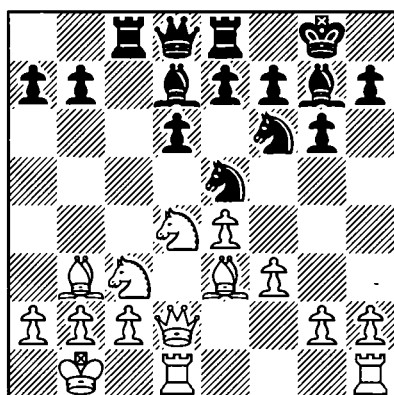
*Modern Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1*

Kg8 55 Qxg6+ Kf8 56 Qf6+ with perpetual check, as 56...Ke8? loses to 57 Qh8+.

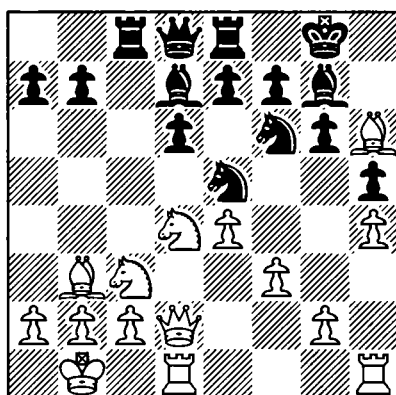
**49 Qh6+ 1-0**

**Game 13**  
**P.Leko-M.Carlsen**  
 1st matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1 Re8 (Diagram 16)**



**Diagram 16 (W)**



**Diagram 17 (B)**

Instead of forcing things, Black too makes a move that is generally useful. His e7-pawn is over-protected and his king has a little more room, but the f7-square could become a soft spot in his position.

**13 h4**

This is the critical continuation. Other moves are less dangerous:

a) 13 g4 is now well met by 13...b5! exploiting the weakness of the f3-pawn. After 14 g5 (14 h4 b4 gives Black good play after 15 Nd5?! Nxd5 16 exd5 a5 or 15 Nce2 a5) 14...b4 15 Nce2 Nh5 16 Ng3 a5 (Black could also consider 16...Nxg3!? 17 hxg3 a5 18 Qh2 Kf8!? 19 Qxh7 Nc4 20 Bxc4 Rxc4 which may favour White, but is not so clear) 17 Nxh5 gxh5 the position is rather unclear.

b) 13 Bh6 Bxh6 14 Qxh6 Rxc3 15 bxc3 a5! (if we compare this position to that with h4 and ..h5 inserted – see the notes to Black's 13th move in Game 3 – the g6-

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

square is not weakened) 16 a4 (Black has excellent compensation after 16 a3 Qb6 17 Ka1 Qc5) 16...Qb6 (or 16...Qc7) 17 h4 (17 Ka2 Qc5 with ideas like ...Qxc3, ...Nc4, and ...b5 gives Black excellent attacking chances) 17...Bxa4 18 h5 Nc6 (18...Bxb3 19 cxb3 Nc6 20 hxg6 Nxd4 21 gxh7+ Kh8 is the same, but Black could try 19...Rc8!? in this line) 19 hxg6 Bxb3 20 gxh7+ Kh8 21 cxb3 Nxd4 22 cxd4 Qxb3+ 23 Ka1 ½-½ was S.Karjakin-V.Ivanchuk, Foros 2007.

### **13...h5**

Black continues in Soltis style. If Black plays 13...Nc4? 14 Bxc4 Rxc4 15 g4 (or even 15 h5!?) he will have a worse version of lines discussed in the previous game.

### **14 Bh6 (Diagram 17)**

White wants to exchange off the Dragon bishop. Instead 14 Bg5 Rc5 transposes directly to 12 h4 h5 13 Bg5 Rc5 14 Kb1 Re8, as in Games 10 and 11. The main alternative is 14 g4! which is considered in the next game.

### **14...Nc4**

Instead 14...Bh8?! preserves the bishop, but White's attack has proven to be very strong after 15 g4!. Also bad is 14...Bxh6?! 15 Qxh6 Rxc3 16 bxc3 when White's Kb1 is much more useful than Black's ...Re8 compared to the analogous positions discussed in the notes to Game 3.

The only reasonable alternative is 14...Qa5!? which has seen some action in the U.S. Chess League:

a) 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 g4 (16 Rhe1!?) 16...hxg4 17 h5 Rh8 18 hxg6 fxg6 19 Ne6+? (White should try 19 f4 or 19 fxg4) 19...Bxe6 20 Bxe6 Nxf3 21 Qe3 Rxc3 22 bxc3 Rxh1 23 Rxh1 Qb6+ 24 Qxb6 axb6 with a winning ending for Black in D.Schneider-M.Martinez, U.S. League (internet) 2005.

b) 15 g4! Rxc3 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 bxc3 Rc8 18 gxh5 Nxh5 19 Rhg1 Nc4 (even worse is 19...Qxc3 20 Qg5!) 20 Bxc4 Rxc4 21 Rg5 (Khalifman mentions 21 e5!? with one possibility being 21...Qxc3 22 Qxc3 Rxc3 23 exd6 exd6 24 Kb2 Rc8 25 Rge1 when White has the advantage) 21...Qxc3 22 Qxc3 Rxc3 23 Kb2 with a slight edge for White in I.Schneider-M.Martinez, U.S. League (internet) 2006.

### **15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 (Diagram 18)**

This position is the same as that in Game 3, but here Kb1 and ...Re8 have been added. This would seem to favour White slightly and it very well could, but matters are not so clear and there are even circumstances where the difference helps Black.

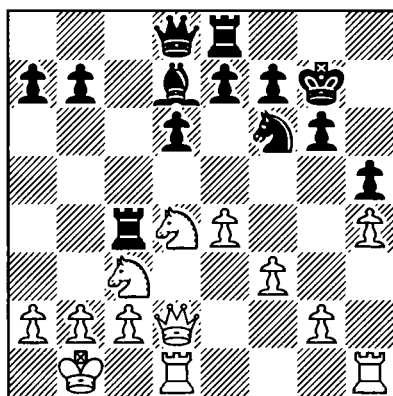
### **17 Nd5**

White sticks with a positional continuation. The alternative is the aggressive 17 g4

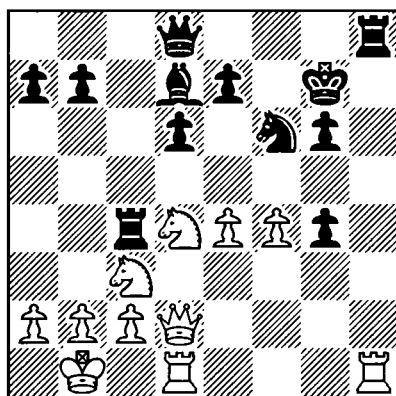
*Modern Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1*

hgx4 18 h5 Rh8 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 f4 (Pavlovic suggests 20 b3!? Rc5 21 fxg4 Bxg4 22 Nd5 Qe8 23 Rxh8 Qxh8 24 Rg1 Qh5 25 Qg2 Bh3 26 Ne6+! Bxe6 27 Nf4 Qg4 28 Qf2 Nxe4 29 Qd4+ Nf6 30 Rxd4 Bxg4 31 Nd3 Ra5 32 Qc3 when he prefers White in this unclear position) when compared to the analogous position, White actually has the move Kb1 for free (because Black has played ...Rf8-e8-h8 instead of ...Rf8-h8). This could be useful in some circumstances, but White's back rank could also be of some consequence.

Now (Diagram 19):



**Diagram 18 (W)**



**Diagram 19 (B)**

a) 20...Rxh1 21 Rxh1 Kf7 22 Qd3 Rc5 23 e5 (after 23 Re1 e5 24 Nb3 Rxc3! with the idea of ...exf4 gives Black good compensation) 23...dxe5 24 Nb3 Rc8 25 fxe5 Bc6 26 Rf1 Qxd3 27 cxd3 Rd8 28 exf6 exf6 29 d4 was P.Negi-V.Papin, Istanbul 2005. White is up a piece but Black's passed pawns are dangerous. Khalifman prefers White here, while my computer thinks Black is better...

b) Again, 20...e5 is obviously similar to Soltis, but with White having played Kb1, so the positions should be compared:

b1) 21 fxe5 dxe5 22 Ne6+ (22 Nde2 Rh3! is again fine for Black) 22...Bxe6 23 Qxd8 Rxd8 24 Rxd8 Nxe4 25 Nxe4 Rxe4 with equal chances in the ending, E.Berg-R.Kasimdzhanov, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

b2) 21 Nde2 Rxh1 22 Rxh1 Nxe4 23 Nxe4 Rxe4 24 fxe5 Qe8! (this time 24...Rxe2? 25 Qxe2 is bad because 25...Qg5 is not check) 25 Qh6+ Kf7 26 Nc1 (here 26 Nf4 Qxe5 27 Qxg6+ Ke7 28 Nd3 Qd5! is fine for Black; with the king on c1, 29 Rh8 would be strong, but here there is 29...Re1+! 30 Nc1 Qd2 when only Black has chances)

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26...dxe5 27 Nd3 Bf5 (27...b6!?) 28 Qh7+ Kf6 29 Qh4+ Kg7 30 Qh7+ Kf6 ½-½  
M.Kravtsiv-S.Abu Sufian, New Delhi 2011.

b3) 21 Rxh8 was recommended by Khalifman. After 21...Qxh8 22 Nde2 Rc6 23 fxe5 (if 23 Qe3 Qh2!) 23...dxe5 24 Ng3 Qh6 25 Qd3 Qh2 (as Khalifman points out, 25...Qg5 26 Nd5! is promising for White) 26 Rf1 Be6! (more natural than 26...Bc8 27 Nce2! as given by Khalifman) White has:

b31) 27 Nce2 Bc4 28 Qd8 Bxe2 29 Qe7+ gives Black a choice between allowing perpetual check after 29...Kg8 or 29...Kh6!? 30 Rh1 Qxh1+ 31 Nxh1 Nxe4 32 Qxe5 Bf3 with unclear play.

b32) 27 Qd8 Bxa2+! (or 27...Bf7 28 Rh1 Bxa2+!) when Black's play looks sufficient after 28 Kxa2 Ra6+ 29 Kb1 Qxg3 or 28 Nxa2 Qxc2+ 29 Ka1 Ra6.

Returning to 17 Nd5 (Diagram 20):

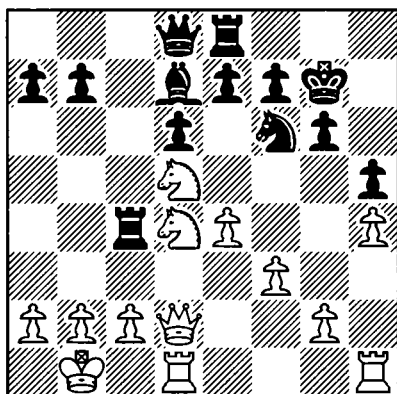


Diagram 20 (B)

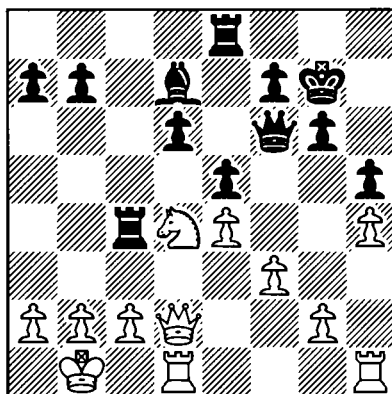


Diagram 21 (W)

**17...e5!**

White keeps some advantage after either 17...e6?! 18 Ne3 or 17...Nxd5 18 exd5 because of his greater control of space.



**TIP: Black can very often play ...e5 in the Dragon when the dark-squared bishops have been exchanged. With this move Black contests the dark squares and fights for his share of the centre. If Black can maintain some control of the weakened d5 and d6, this advance should be considered. Black can sometimes even sacrifice the d6-pawn, as he does in this game, to get active piece play.**

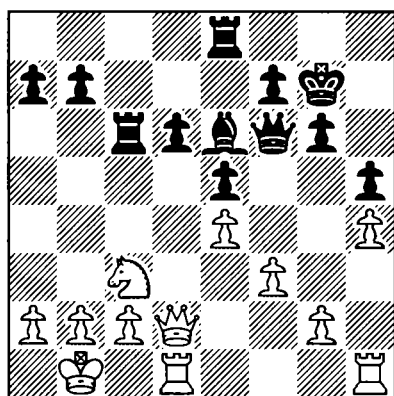


### 18 Nxf6

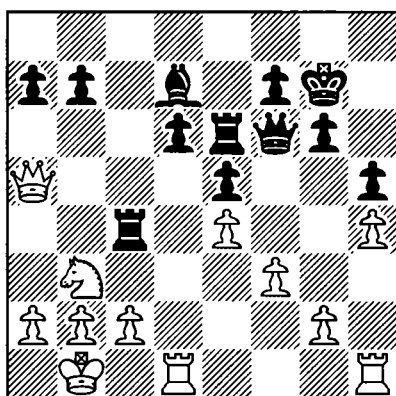
Black has no problems after 18 Ne2 Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Rc6 with the idea of ...Be6. Also harmless is 18 Nb3 Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Rc6 20 Na5 Rb6 with the idea 21 Nxb7 Qb8.

### 18...Qxf6 (Diagram 21) 19 Nb3

Less threatening is 19 Ne2 Rc6 (after 19...Be6 20 Qxd6 Rec8 21 c3 White had an edge in I.Salgado Lopez-A.Arribas Lopez, Linares 2007, and here 21 Nc3!? looks even better) 20 Nc3 Be6 (Diagram 22) and now:



**Diagram 22 (W)**



**Diagram 23 (B)**

a) 21 Qe3 Rec8! is fine for Black. If 22 Qxa7?! Qd8! (threatening ...Ra8) 23 Qe3 Qa5 and Black has a strong attack.

b) 21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 Qxd5 Qf4! 23 Qd2 Qxd2 24 Rxd2 f5 25 Re1 Kf6 26 c3 Ke6 was level in S.Karjakin-M.Carlsen, Baku 2008.

### 19...Rec8



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Black offers the d6-pawn for activity rather than passively defending the pawn.

Instead 19...Rc6? 20 Na5 Rb6 21 Nc4 is no good, but protecting the pawn with 19...Re6 has also been tried. Now White should play 20 Qa5! (Diagram 23).

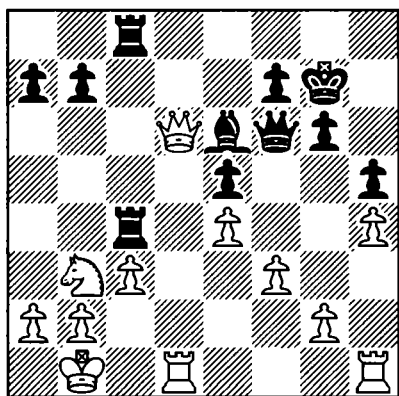
White has tried other moves, but this is the most pointed. The queen attacks a7 and there are ideas of invading Black's position via c7, b6 (after ...a6), and a7. Black has tried:

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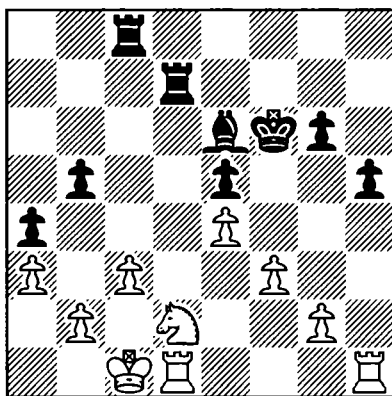
a) 20...Ra4 21 Qc7 Bc6 22 Rd2!? (after 22 a3 Kf8 Black intends ...Qe7, but 23 Qb8+ Kg7 24 Rd2 keeps a little pressure) 22...Ra6 23 a3 Rb6 (or 23...Qf4 24 Rhd1 Qxh4 25 Rxd6 with a small edge) 24 Qb8 a6 25 Qc7! 25...Rb5 26 Rhd1 Qxh4 27 Rxd6 when Black's awkwardly placed b5-rook gives him some problems.

b) 20...a6 21 Qb6 d5!? (after 21...Bc8 both 22 Na5 and 22 Qe3 keeps some slight pressure) 22 Qxb7 Bc6 23 Qxa6 Ba4 24 Qa7 dxe4 25 fxe4 Bxb3 26 axb3 Rxe4 27 g3 when White is up a pawn, although the position is still not so clear.

**20 Qxd6 Be6 21 c3 (Diagram 24)**



**Diagram 24 (B)**



**Diagram 25 (W)**

**21...b5**

Black has also tried 21...a5 a few times. After 22 Nxa5 Ra4 23 Nb3 Ra6 24 Qd2 (24 Qb4!?) 24...Rca8 25 Qg5 Qxg5 26 hxg5 Rxa2 Black has some compensation for the pawn, but I do not think it can be enough.

A reasonable alternative is 21...R4c6!? and Black has done okay after 22 Qd3 (or 22 Qd2 Qe7) 22...Qe7.

**22 Qd2**

White has also tried 22 Rd2!? in several correspondence games. After 22...R4c6 23 Qa3 (if 23 Qd3 Qf4 24 Rdd1 Black could play 24...Rb6 with the idea of ...b4 or 24...Qg3 25 Qxb5 Rb6 26 Qe2 Bxb3 27 axb3 Rxb3 when it is not easy for White to make progress) Black has:

a) 23...a6 24 Na5 R6c7 25 Rd6 Qf4 26 Nb3 Qg3 27 Rd2 Qf4 28 Rhd1 Qxh4 29 Qxa6 b4 30 cxb4 Bxb3 31 axb3 Qe7 32 Qd6 was A.Isaev-M.Rocius, correspondence 2008.

*Modern Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1*

This looks funny, but White is still probably a little better.

b) 23...Rd8! is an active solution: 24 Qxa7 Bxb3 25 Rxd8 Qxd8 (worse is 25...Bxa2+?! 26 Qxa2 Qxd8 27 Qd5!) 26 axb3 Qd3+ 27 Ka2 Qc2 (even better is 27...Qe2! 28 Qa5 Rd6) 28 Qa5 Qxg2 29 Qxb5 Qxh1 30 Qxc6 Qxh4 when Black had enough play to draw in S.Salzmann-D.Flude, correspondence 2007.

**22...a5?!**

This inaccuracy goes unpunished. Better was 22...Qe7!? intending ...b4. If 23 Qd6 Qf6 repeats the position.

**23 Qg5**

Black would have more serious problems to solve after 23 Nxa5 Ra4 24 Nb3 Rca8 25 Qg5!.

**23...Qxg5 24 hxg5 a4 25 Nd2 R4c7 26 a3 Rd7!**

The d2-knight is short on moves so Black takes control of the d-file.

**27 Kc1 f6 28 gxf6+ Kxf6 (Diagram 25)**

Black has enough for the pawn and the game quickly fizzles out to a draw.

**29 Nf1 Rxd1+ 30 Kxd1 Rd8+ 31 Ke1 Kg5 32 g3 Rd3 33 Nd2 Bc4 34 Nxc4 bxc4 35 Ke2 Rd6 36 Rh2 ½-½**

Note that White cannot play 36 Rd1? because of 36...Rxd1 37 Kxd1 h4 when Black wins.

## *Game 14*

**J.Polgar-G.Kaidanov**

2nd matchgame, Hilton Head 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1 Re8 13 h4 h5 14 g4! (Diagram 26)**

This attacking continuation is much more dangerous than 14 Bh6. We saw in Game 1 that the direct 13 g4 did not work so well for White in the Soltis Variation, but the addition of the moves 12 Kb1 Re8 actually changes things considerably.

**14...hxg4 15 h5 Nxh5 (Diagram 27)**

Instead 15...Rxc3 looks insufficient after 16 Qxc3! (Black managed to get counter-play after 16 bxc3 Nxf3 17 Nxf3 Nxe4 in L.Aroshidze-D.Vocaturo, Antalya 2009) 16...Nxh5 17 f4 Nc6 18 f5.

**16 Bh6!**

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This is more common than the main alternative 16 Rdg1. While 16 Bh6 allows Black more possibilities, the reality is that none of them are really very good. After 16 Rdg1 if Black plays 16...e6 17 Bh6 we have transposed back to the game. In fact this was the actual move order of the main game, but I have fiddled with the moves to better show the differences between them. Black has an interesting option, however, in 16 Rdg1 Qa5!?

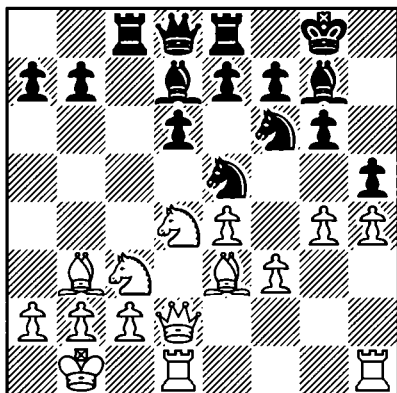


Diagram 26 (B)

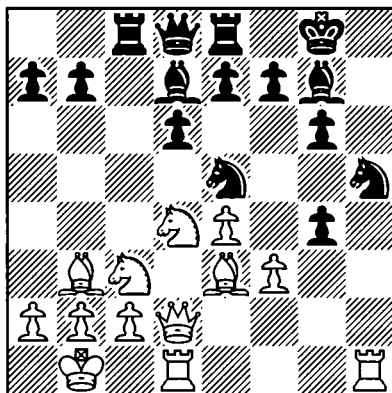


Diagram 27 (W)

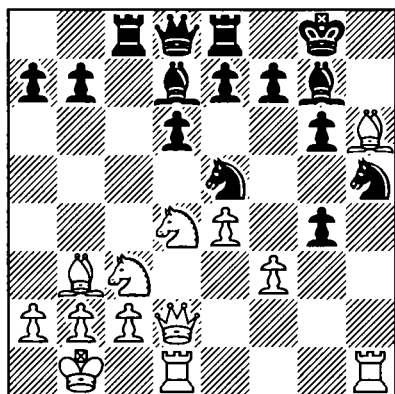


**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** As mentioned before, when there are two different ways to reach a sharp position, there are almost always some differences. Here Black has a rare try which is very likely to give him better chances than he has in the main line. In contrast, Black's deviations after 16 Bh6! all look insufficient. Of course this verdict could change in the future...

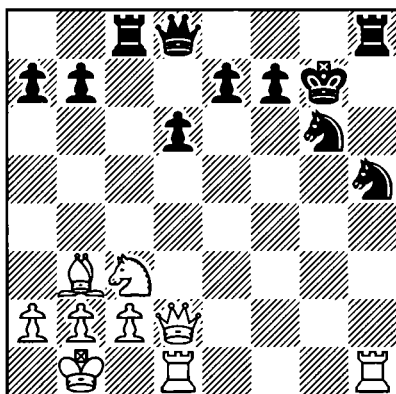
After 16...Qa5!?, 17 Bh6 Bf6! has played a few times, although not at high level:

- a) 18 Qd1 Rxc3!? (18...Nc4 is also possible, with the idea 19 Nd5 Be5 when 20 f4? loses to 20...Nd2+) 19 Bd2 Rd3! 20 cxd3 Qa6 was good for Black in Y.Yuan-K.Sellars, Toronto 2009.
- b) 18 fxg4 Bxg4 (18...Nxg4! looks even stronger) 19 Bf4?! Nxf4 20 Qxf4 Rxc3 21 bxc3 Qxc3 22 Rxg4 Qxd4 was excellent for Black in M.Drogovoz-V.Rjanova, Ivanovo 2011.
- c) 18 f4 Nc4 19 Qd3 (Black is also better after 19 Bxc4 Rxc4 20 Nb3 Qa6 21 e5 Bh8) 19...Qc5 20 Nde2 Nxb2! 21 Kxb2 Bb5 and Black was winning in A.Nukin-E.Kanter, Izhevsk 2011.

Although White can probably do better than all of this, 16 Bh6 (**Diagram 28**) still looks more accurate to me.



**Diagram 28 (B)**



**Diagram 29 (W)**

#### **16...e6**

This move covers the d5-square and prepares to bring the queen to f6 to help the defence. The game makes this look insufficient, but the alternatives do not look any better:

a) 16...Bf6 and now:

a1) 17 fxg4 Bxg4 18 Rdg1 Rxc3 (perhaps better is 18...e6 intending 19 Ndb5 Qe7) 19 Qxc3 Qb6 20 Be3 Qa6 21 Qd2 was J.Cubas-A.Fier, Campinas 2009. Black is not in immediate danger of being mated here, but his compensation for the exchange looks insufficient.

a2) 17 Nd5 Nc4 18 Qg2 Be5 19 f4 Bg7 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 Bxc4 Rxc4 22 f5 gave White the initiative in D.Cerovic-G.Starcevic, Belgrade 2010.

b) 16...Kh7 spends a tempo to force White to exchange bishops immediately. After 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 fxg4 (18 Rxh5 gxh5 19 Qg5+ Ng6 20 Nf5+ Bxf5 21 exf5 e6! is good for Black) 18...Bxg4 19 Nf5+ (Black's idea can be understood after 19 Rdg1 Rh8! 20 Qg5 e6 21 Rxg4 Nxg4 22 Qxg4 Nf6 with a good position) we have:

b1) 19...gxf5 20 Qg5+ Ng6 21 exf5 highlights the weakness of the f7-square: for example, 21...Bxd1 22 Bxf7! or 21...Bxf5 22 Qxf5 Nf6 and here 23 Bxf7 Kxf7 24 Rh7+ is crushing, while 23 Rh7+! Kxh7 24 Bxf7 actually forces mate.

b2) 19...Bxf5 20 exf5 Rh8 21 fxg6 Nxg6 (**Diagram 29**) has been defended by

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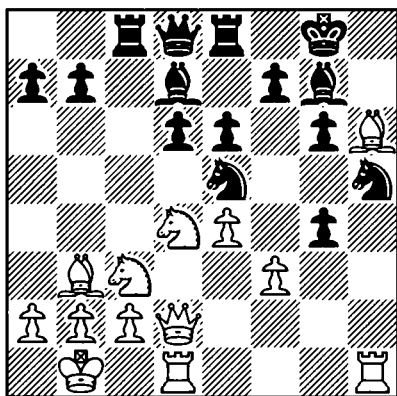
Kasimdzhanov a couple of times. It seems miserable for Black, however:

b21) 22 Nd5 Nf6 23 Nxf6 exf6 24 Rxh8 Qxh8 was L.Dominguez Perez-R.Kasimdzhanov, Dresden Olympiad 2008. This looks ugly, but Black managed to hold pretty easily.

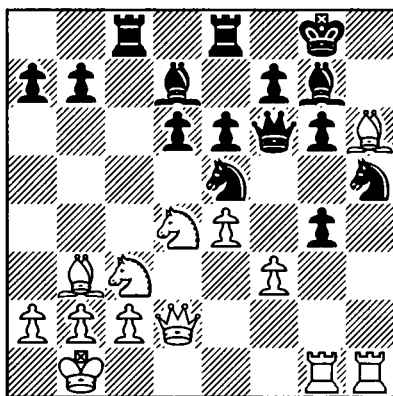
b22) 22 Rdf1 Nhf4 (22...Nf6 23 Ne4 is variation 'b23' below) 23 Rhg1 e5 24 Ne2 Rh4 25 Nxf4 Rxf4 26 Rxf4 exf4 27 Qxf4 is clearly better for White according to Dominguez.

b23) 22 Ne4 Nf6 (a better try is 22...d5 23 Bxd5 Nhf4 24 Rxh8 Kxh8 25 Bxf7 Qxd2 26 Rxd2 Ne5 when Black should hold) 23 Rdf1! (23 Nxf6 exf6 is back to 'b21') 23...Rxh1 (again the f7-square is a problem: 23...Nxe4? 24 Rxf7+) 24 Rxh1 d5 25 Nxf6 Kxf6 (25...exf6 26 Bxd5 is much better for White) 26 Qf2+ Kg7 27 Rf1 f6 28 Qf5 and White had an ongoing attack in T.Radjabov-R.Kasimdzhanov, Elista 2008.

Returning to 16...e6 (**Diagram 30**):



**Diagram 30 (W)**



**Diagram 31 (W)**

### **17 Rdg1**

Worse is 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 Rdg1 when Black has 18...Rh8!.

### **17...Qf6**

This is the natural move and in the analogous position without Kb1 and ...Re8 this is very good for Black. Here things do not turn out so well, so Black may want to examine the alternatives even though his results have not been promising:

a) 17...Rxc3?! 18 Bxg7 (18 bxc3!?) 18...Kxg7 (White wins after 18...Rxb3 19 Qh6 f6 20 Rxh5 gxh5 21 Bxf6) 19 Qxc3 Qb6 20 fxg4 Nf6 21 Qh3 Kf8 22 Nf3 Qc5 23 Ng5 a5?

(better is 23...Ke7 24 Qh4 Bb5 to cover f1 and prepare ...Ned7, but White still has the upper hand) 24 Rf1 (24 Qh4 threatens Nxe6 and looks even stronger: for example, 24...Ke7 25 Nh7) 24...Nexg4 25 Nxf7 Ke7 was L.Aroshidze-O.Perez Mitjans, Barcelona 2011. Now 26 e5! dxe5 27 Nh6 would have been winning for White.

b) 17...Bh8?! maintains the bishop, but Black's king is still very uncomfortable. White has a pleasant choice:

b1) 18 fxg4 Nf6 19 Bg5 Bg7 20 Qh2 Qb6 21 Bxf6 Bxf6 22 Nf5! gxf5 (White has a crushing attack after 22...exf5 23 Nd5 Qd8 24 gxf5) 23 g5! Qxg1+ (or 23...Bg7 24 exf5 exf5 25 g6!) 24 Rxg1 Bg7 25 exf5 Nf3 26 Qxd6 Nxd6 27 Qxd7 was winning for White in R.Noritano-S.Tatar, Internet (rapid) 2006.

b2) 18 Bg5 Qb6 19 fxg4 Nc4 (Black loses even faster after 19...Nf6 20 Rxh8+ or 19...Ng7 20 Qh2) 20 Bxc4 Qxd4 (White wins after 20...Bxd4 21 gxh5 Bxg1 22 hxg6 fxg6 23 Qf4!) 21 gxh5 Qxd2 22 Bxd2 Rxc4 23 hxg6 f5 24 g7 Bxg7 25 Bh6 1-0 was I.Lindam-W.Dahm, correspondence 2008. If 25...Re7 26 exf5 exf5 27 Nd5 Rf7 28 Nf6+! wins.

c) 17...g3 looks like the best of the bunch. White has:

c1) 18 Rxh5 gxh5 19 Rxg3 Ng6 20 Nf5 Bf6 (not 20...exf5?? 21 Rxg6 1-0 J.Muller-S.Goundar, Gold Coast 2009) 21 Nxd6 Rc6 22 Nxe8 Bxe8 23 Qh2 h4 24 Rg2 Bxc3 (Stohl gives 24...Rxc3 25 bxc3 Qd1+ 26 Bc1 Qxf3 27 Rxg6+! fxg6 28 Bxe6+ Bf7 29 Qb8+ Kg7 30 Qc7 Bd8 31 Qxd8 Bxe6 32 Qxh4 when Black will suffer, but he may be able to hold) 25 bxc3 Qd1+ 26 Bc1 Qxf3 27 Rg1 Kh7 28 Qb8 Bd7? (28...h3! would give Black sufficient play) 29 Qd8! Bc8 30 Qg5 Kg8 (now 30...h3 loses after 31 Qh6+ Kg8 32 Rxg6+ fxg6 33 Qxg6+ Kh8 34 Bg5) 31 Qxh4 when White's bishops and safer king gave him a big edge in M.Vachier Lagrave-R.Kasimdzhanov, San Sebastian 2009.

c2) 18 Nce2! Qf6 (18...Bf6 19 Rxh5! gxh5 20 Nxd6 also looks very good for White) 19 Bxg7 (not 19 Bg5? Nxf3) and now:

c21) 19...Qxg7 20 Nxd6 (also possible is 20 Rxh5!? gxh5 21 Rxg3 Ng6 22 Nf4, S.Cid Gallego-H.Flatz, correspondence 2008) 20...Nxd6 21 Rxg3 a5 22 a3 (Pavlovic suggests 22 f4 Nc4 23 Qf2 with the idea 23...e5? 24 f5!) 22...a4 23 Ba2 Nc4 24 Bxc4 Rxc4 25 Ne2 e5 26 Rg2 Rec8 27 Qxd6 Be6 28 Nc3 and White was much better in G.Pezzica-T.Habermehl, correspondence 2008.

c22) 19...Kxg7 20 Rxh5! gxh5 21 Nxd6 Kf8 22 Nxd6 Qh8 23 Qg5 was Y.Gonzalez Vidal-Y.Borges Fera, Ciego de Avila 2009. White clearly has more than enough for the exchange.

Now we return to 17...Qf6 (**Diagram 31**):

**18 fxg4**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Worse is 18 Bxg7?! Kxg7 19 fxg4 Qf4!, as in Z.Stanojoski-M.Parligras, Budva 2009.

### 18...Bxh6 19 Qxh6 Qg7 (Diagram 32)

This is a position where it makes a big difference that White's king is on b1 instead of c1. Because 19...Qf4? is not check White wins immediately with 20 Rxh5.

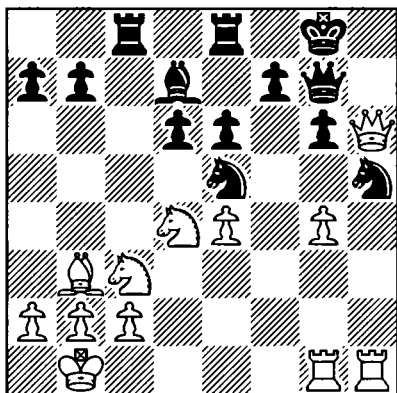


Diagram 32 (W)

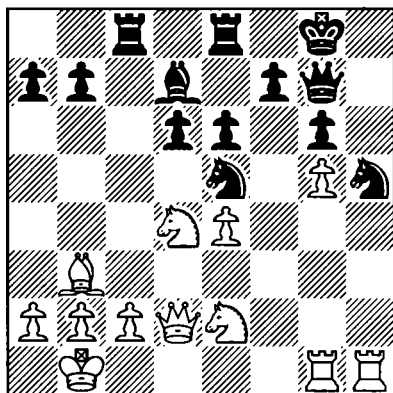


Diagram 33 (B)

20 Qd2!



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This move is a big improvement on 20 Qe3. With 20 Qd2! White is preparing to triple on the h-file and Polgar's novelty seems to refute Black's set-up.

After the alternative 20 Qe3 Nf6 21 g5 Nh5 Black's position has held up: for example, 22 Ndb5 (White could try 22 Nde2 with the idea of Ng3 as in Dominguez-Carlsen in the notes to Black's 16th move in Game 15) 22...Bxb5 23 Nxb5 Rd8 24 Qxa7 (24 Rd1 Qf8 25 Qxa7 Qe7 is unclear according to Smerdon) 24...Nf3 25 Rg2 Qe5! 26 Qe3 Ne1! 27 Rxe1 Qxb5 28 c3 Qe5. White is a pawn up, but Black's position is rock solid. After 29 a3 b5 30 Ka2 Kg7 31 Rf1 Rc7 32 Qf3 Ra8 33 Rh1 Rh8 34 Rd1 Rd8 35 Rh1 Rh8 36 Rd1 Rd8 37 Rh1 a draw was agreed in L.Dominguez Perez-D.Smerdon, Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2009.

### 20...Nf6 21 g5 Nh5 22 Nce2 (Diagram 33) 22...Nc4

This is a standard move of course, but Black should think twice before giving up his strong knight for White's rather ineffective bishop. Still, White's straightforward plan is very strong so it is hard to suggest a decent alternative. One example



*Modern Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1*

went 22...Bc6 23 Qe3 d5 24 Ng3 Nxc3 25 Rxc3 dxe4 26 Nxc6 Nxc6 27 Rgh3 Ne7?! 28 Qxe4 a5 (or 28...Nf5 29 Qg2 Kf8 30 Rh8+ Ke7 31 Qxb7+) 29 Bxe6 fxe6 30 Qxe6+ 1-0 P.Konguvel-V.Antonio, Delhi 2010. At first it looks like 27...Qe5 may offer some salvation, but after 28 Qf4! Kf8 29 Qf6! Qxf6 30 gxf6 Ne7 31 Rh8+ (not 31 fxe7+? Kxe7) 31...Ng8 32 R1h7 White wins.

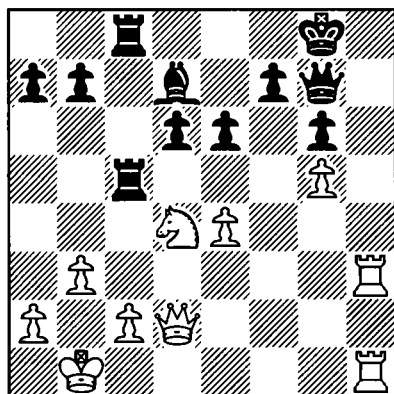
**23 Bxc4 Rxc4 24 b3 Rc5 25 Ng3 Nxc3**

Black fared no better with 25...Nf4 26 Qxf4 Qxd4 (White is also winning after 26...e5 27 Qf6!) 27 Rg2 Rf5 28 Nxf5 exf5 29 Rd2 Qc3 30 Rd3 Qg7 31 Rdh3 fxe4 32 Rh7 and 1-0 in P.Sowray-A.Eckersley Waites, British League 2010.

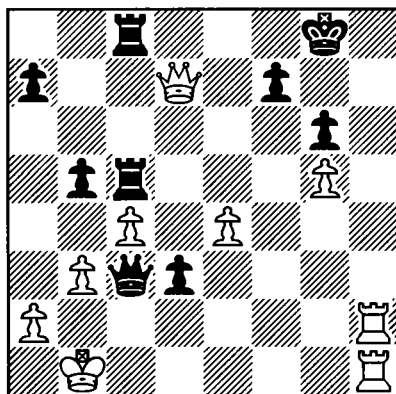
**26 Rxc3 Rec8**

Polgar points out that White's attack is decisive after 26...e5 27 Nf5! Bxf5 (or 27...gxf5 28 Qxd6) 28 exf5 gxf5 29 g6! fxg6 30 Rgh3!.

**27 Rgh3 (Diagram 34)**



**Diagram 34 (B)**



**Diagram 35 (W)**

Here is another position where having White's king on b1 makes all of the difference. Were it on c1 Black would have 27...Rxc2+!.

**27...e5 28 Rh4! exd4**

A faster death was 28...f5 29 Qh2 and 1-0 in A.Abreu Delgado-L.Lorenzo de la Riva, Barbera del Valles 2010.

**29 Qh2 Kf8 30 Qxd6+ Kg8 31 Qxd7 d3**

No better is 31...Rxc2 32 Qh3 Kf8 33 Rh8+ Ke7 34 Rxc8.

**32 c4**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

This is the most practical move, but 32 cxd3 Rc1+ 33 Rxc1 Rxc1+ 34 Kxc1 Qa1+ 35 Kd2 wins as well.

### 32...Qc3 33 R4h2 b5 (Diagram 35)

White uses the same idea after 33...R5c7 34 Qd6 Rc6: 35 e5! Qc2+ (or 35...Rxd6 36 Rh8+ Kg7 37 R1h7 mate) 36 Rxc2 dxc2+ 37 Kxc2 Rxd6 38 exd6 with an easily winning ending.

### 34 e5!

Interference.

### 34...Qxe5 35 Rh7 R5c7 36 Qd6! 1-0

After 36...Qc3 37 Qf6 Qc2+ 38 Ka1 Black will be mated.

## Game 15 V.Topalov-M.Carlsen Bilbao 2008

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1 a6!? (Diagram 36)

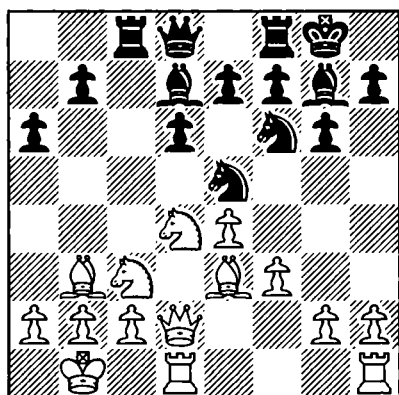


Diagram 36 (W)

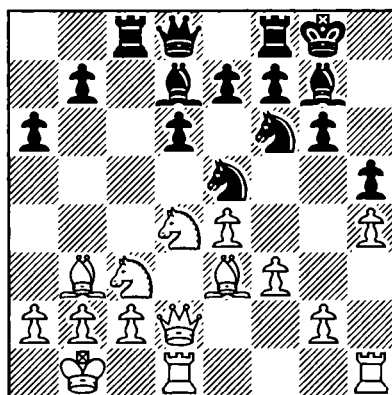


Diagram 37 (W)



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This move was brought into the limelight by Magnus Carlsen. Usually the move ...a6 is too slow in the Yugoslav Attack, but Carlsen clearly thought that here it is at least as useful as 12...Re8.

While 12...a6 does prepare ...b5, really it is just a different kind of waiting move. Instead 12...Re8 may have overprotected the e7-pawn, but in some cases Black had problems with the freshly weakened f7-square.

### **13 h4**

Other moves are less intimidating:

a) 13 g4 b5 14 h4 a5!? (this loses a tempo, so Black lacks the move ...Re8, but it does not make much difference – Black has good counterplay) 15 h5 a4 16 hxg6 axb3 17 gxh7+ Kh8 18 cxb3 b4 19 Nce2 Qa5 20 Bh6 Bxh6 21 Qxh6 Ra8 22 Nc1 Rfc8 23 g5 Nxe4! 24 g6 (if 24 fxe4 Rxc1+ 25 Kxc1 Qxa2) 24...Rxc1+ 25 Kxc1 fxg6 26 fxe4 Qxa2 27 Nc2 Qxb3 0-1 K.Soderberg-T.Teeriaho, correspondence 2009.

b) 13 Bh6 Bxh6 14 Qxh6 Rxc3 15 bxc3 a5! (after 15...Qc7 16 h4! Qxc3 17 h5?! Nc4 gave Black good play in I.Saric-E.Can, Chotowa 2010, but as Jones points out, better is the thematic 17 Ne2! with the idea 17...Qc5 18 h5) 16 a3 (if 16 a4 Qb6) 16...a4 17 Ba2 Qa5 18 Qc1 Rc8 19 Rhe1 Rxc3 20 Re3 Rc5 21 Qd2 Qc7 22 Kb2 and now rather than 22...d5 23 Rc3!, as in N.Mamedov-D.Dvirnyy, Cappelle la Grande 2009, both 22...b5 and 22...Bb5 look good for Black.

c) 13 Rhe1 is the only other move to be seen at a high level. After 13...b5 14 Bh6 Bxh6 15 Qxh6 Rxc3 (also possible is 15...b4 16 Nd5 e6, while Golubev's suggested 15...a5!? 16 Ncxb5 Bxb5 17 Nxb5 a4! 18 Bxa4 Qa5 19 b3 Rc5 looks quite good) 16 bxc3 a5 17 f4! Neg4 18 Qh4 a4 19 Bxf7+!? (or 19 h3!? axb3 20 cxb3 e5! 21 hxg4 exd4 22 Rxd4 Bxg4 with unclear play) 19...Rxf7 20 e5 Nd5 21 e6 Nxc3+ (21...Rxf4 loses to 22 exd7 Nge3 23 Qh3 Nxc3+ 24 Kc1 Nxa2+ 25 Kb2 Nxd1+ 26 Rxd1 Nb4 27 Ne6) and now instead of 22 Kc1 Bxe6 23 Nxe6 Qa5 24 Qxg4 Nxa2+ 25 Kb2 Qc3+ 26 Kxa2 Qxc2+ 27 Ka1 Qc3+ 28 Kb1 Qb3+ 29 Ka1 Qc3+ and 1/2-1/2, as in V.Ivanchuk-M.Carlsen, Bilbao 2008, Golubev gives 22 Ka1! Bxe6 23 Nxe6 Qc8 24 Rd4 Nxa2 25 Qh3! Rf6 26 Ng5 h6 27 Ne4!.

### **13...h5 (Diagram 37) 14 g4!**

Once again the direct approach is the most dangerous. Instead 14 Bg5!? could be met by 14...b5 or 14...Nc4. White's main alternative is 14 Bh6, as it was in the 12...Re8 line. After 14...Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 it would appear that compared to the position without Kb1 and ...a6 White would be better off here, but the differences are small and can even favour Black. Some possibilities:

a) 17 g4 hxg4 18 h5 Rh8 (the rook goes here in one move, so now Black has ...a6 for free) 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 f4 e5 is basically the same as the analogous position without Kb1 and ...a6.

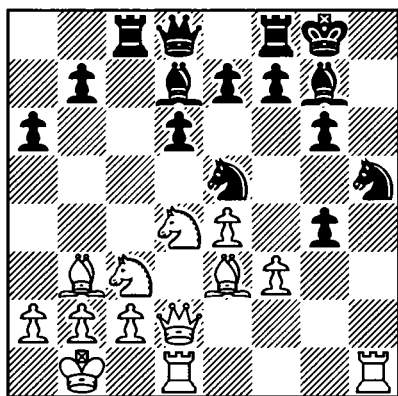
b) 17 Nd5 e5! 18 Nb3 (here Black is helped by the fact that 18 Nxf6?? is not possible

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

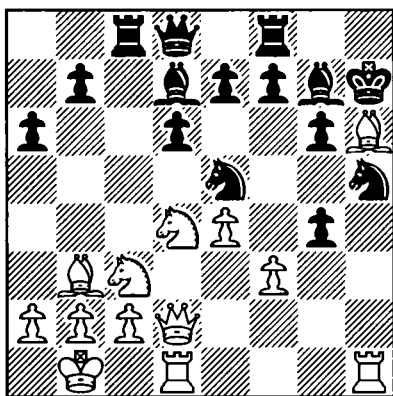
because after 18...Rxd4! there is no Nxe8+) 18...Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Rc6 20 Na5 Rb6 21 Nc4 (21 Nxb7 Qb8) 21...Be6 22 Qd3 Bxc4 23 Qxc4 Qc7 with a level position.

c) 17 Rhe1 Re8 (17...b5!?) 18 Nde2 Qa5 19 Nf4 Rec8 20 Ncd5 Qxd2 21 Rxd2 Nxd5 22 Nxd5 Re8 was soon agreed drawn in V.Anand-M.Carlsen, Mainz (rapid) 2008.

**14...hxc4 15 h5 Nxh5 (Diagram 38)**



**Diagram 38 (W)**



**Diagram 39 (W)**

### 16 Rdg1

It is interesting that in the similar position with 12...Re8 White should prefer 16 Bh6, but in this case 16 Rdg1 appears to be stronger. We should find out why! After 16 Bh6 Black has:

a) 16...e6?! 17 Rdg1 is similar to the last game. After 17...Qf6 18 fxg4 Bxh6 19 Qxh6 Qg7 White has:

a1) 20 Qe3 Nf6 21 g5 Nh5 22 Nde2 (22 Ndb5 is not possible now!) 22...a5 23 Rxh5 gxh5 24 Nf4 Ng4 25 Qh3 gives White good compensation and after the 25...Qd4? 26 Nce2 Qxe4 of L.Dominguez Perez-M.Carlsen, Biel 2008, 27 Nxh5! would give White a winning position.

a2) 20 Qd2! Nf6 21 g5 Nh5 22 Nce2! is similar to Game 14 and I do not see how Black can improve his chances here.

b) 16...Kh7! (Diagram 39).



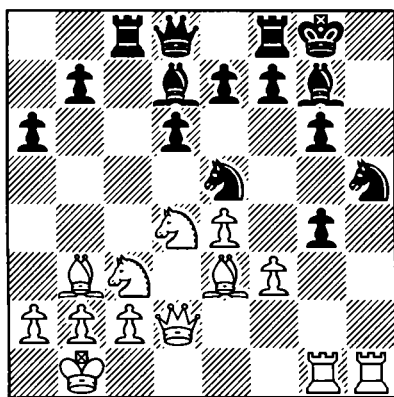
**NOTE: Herein lays the difference. Black is better off with his rook on f8 in this particular line.**

After 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 White has tried:

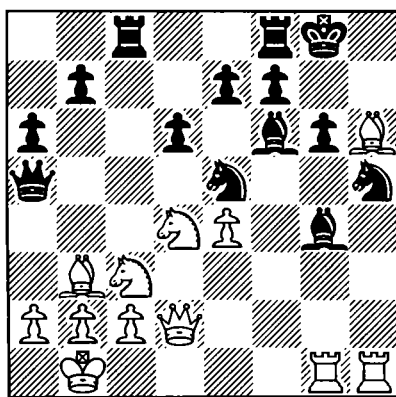
b1) 18 Rdg1 Rh8 19 f4 Nc4 20 Bxc4 Rxc4 21 f5 Nf6 and White did not have enough for the pawns in K.Maslak-D.Gochelashvili, Moscow 2010.

b2) 18 fxg4 is the move White would play if Black's rook were on e8 – see the Kasimdzhanov games in the notes to White's 16th move of the last game. Here Black's chances are greatly improved because f7 is defended: 18...Bxg4 19 Nf5+ gxf5! 20 Qg5+ Ng6 21 exf5 Bxd1 22 Bxf7 Rxf7! 23 Qxg6+ and now Black has a choice between 23...Kh8 24 Qxf7 Qg8 25 Qxg8+ Kxg8 26 Nxd1 Nf6 with equality or 23...Kf8 24 Nxd1 Qb6! when after the mutually forced 25 c3 Rg7 26 Qxh5 Black may be better, but the position remains unclear.

Returning to 16 Rdg1 (Diagram 40):



**Diagram 40 (B)**



**Diagram 41 (W)**

### **16...Rc5**

Instead 16...e6 17 Bh6 transposes to variation 'a' in the note to White's last move and White has the extra possibility 17 Bg5, which was Khalifman's suggestion. The most important option for Black, however, is 16...Qa5!? 17 Bh6 and then:

a) 17...Rxc3? 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 Rxh5 Rxb3 20 Qxa5 was winning for White in V.Anand-M.Carlsen, Mainz (rapid) 2008, and 20 Qh6+! is even more convincing: for example, 20...Kf6 21 Qg5+ Kg7 22 Nxb3 Qb4 23 Rgh1 Rg8 24 Rh7+ Kf8 25 Qh6+ Ke8 26 Qg7!.

b) 17...Bf6! 18 fxg4 (instead 18 Qd1 Nxf3!? 19 Nxf3 Rxc3 20 bxc3 Qxc3 21 e5 dxe5 gives Black good compensation according to Golubev, while 18 Bxf8 Kxf8 19 f4 Nc4 20 Bxc4 Rxc4 is unclear because winning material with 21 e5 dxe5 22 Nb3 Qd8 23

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Rd1 backfires after 23...exf4 24 Qxd7 Qxd7 25 Rxd7 Bxc3 26 bxc3 g3 as given by Monokroussos) 18...Bxg4 reaches a critical position (**Diagram 41**).

White has:

b1) 19 Bxf8 Kxf8 20 Qe3 Rxc3!? 21 Qxc3 (or 21 bxc3 Qc5 with good play) 21...Qxc3 22 bxc3 e6 gives Black very interesting play in the ending, even though he is down two exchanges: 23 Bc4 (White indirectly trades his bishop, which has little scope) 23...Nxc4 24 Rxg4 Be5 (intending ...Nf6 to target the e4-pawn) 25 Rg2 b5 26 Rf2 Kg8 (26...Nf6!?) 27 a4 bxa4 28 Ka2?! (better is Svidler's suggestion 28 Nc6!? Bxc3 29 Ka2 with the idea Rb1) 28...Nf6 29 Re2 d5! 30 exd5 Nxd5 and Black took over in S.Karjakin-T.Radjabov, Sochi 2008.

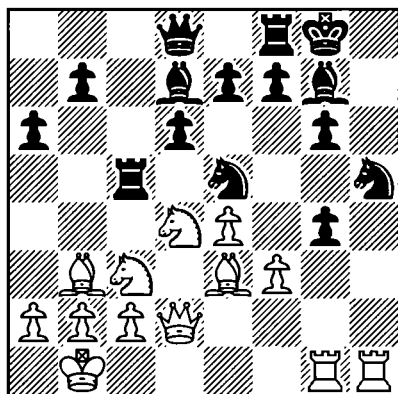
b2) 19 Bf4!? is an unusual idea, but it is dangerous:

b21) 19...Nf3? 20 Nxf3 Bxf3 21 Rxg6+ Bg7 22 Rhg1 won quickly in J.Fernandez Lledo-F.Montoliu Cervero, Granada 2009.

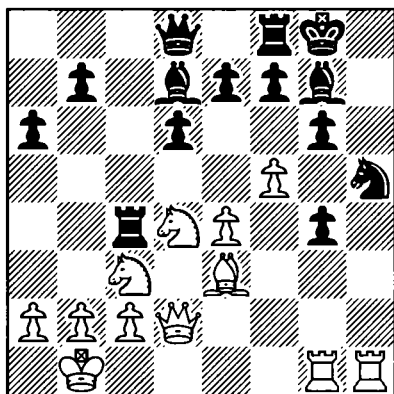
b22) 19...Kh7? 20 Qg2! e6 21 Nd5 (or 21 Bxe5 Bxe5 22 Nxe6 Bxe6 23 Bxe6) 21...exd5 22 Bxe5 Bxe5 23 Qxg4 again saw Black's position demolished in G.Gopal-Z.Javakhadze, Balaguer 2009.

b23) 19...Nxf4 20 Qxf4 Rxc3!? (it is hard to find anything better) 21 bxc3 Qxc3 22 Qh6 Re8 23 Rxg4! e6! 24 Rf4 Nd3 (similar is 24...Nc4 25 Bxc4 Qxd4 26 Rxf6 Qxf6, while Khalifman suggests 26 e5!? Qxe5 27 Kc1) 25 cxd3 Qxd4 26 Rxf6 (Black would have serious play after 26 e5 Qxd3+ 27 Bc2 Qb5+ 28 Kc1 Qxe5 29 Bxg6 Rc8+) 26...Qxf6 27 Qh7+ (27 Qe3!?) 27...Kf8 28 Qh3 and White keeps some advantage according to Khalifman. White has an extra piece and Black's pawns are not going anywhere.

Now we return to 16...Rc5 (**Diagram 42**):



**Diagram 42 (W)**



**Diagram 43 (B)**

### **17 Bh6**

White has an alternative in 17 f4!? Nc4 18 Bxc4 Rxc4 19 f5 (**Diagram 43**).

This looks dangerous for Black, but it seems he can get fair chances with precise play. Some possibilities:

a) 19...Nf6 20 Bh6! Nxe4 21 Nxe4 Bxd4 (if 21...Rxd4 22 Qh2) 22 f6! Qb6 23 b3 Bxf6 24 Nxf6+ exf6 25 Bg7! (actually 25 Bxf8 Kxf8 26 Re1 Be6 27 Rxe6 is even stronger) was given by Khalifman. White wins after 25...Qxg1+ 26 Rxc1 Kxg7 27 Rh1 Rh8 28 Rxh8 Kxh8 29 bxc4.

b) 19...Qa5 20 Rxc4 Rxc3 21 bxc3 Rc8 22 Rxh5 Rxc3 (after 22...gxh5?, 23 Rg1 is good enough) 23 Rg2 Qb6+ 24 Kc1 Rxe3 25 Qxe3 and now White is winning after either 25...Bxd4 26 Qb3 or 25...Qxd4 26 Qxd4 Bxd4 27 fxg6.

c) 19...e5 20 fxe6 fxe6 21 Qd3 (Black has sufficient play after 21 Rxc4 Qf6! 22 Nde2 e5) 21...Rxd4!? (instead Khalifman gives 21...b5 22 Rxc4 Qf6 23 e5 dxe5 24 Rxc6 leading to a clear advantage) 22 Bxd4 Rf3! 23 Qd2 e5 24 Be3 Be6 was G.Staf-A.Moreno, correspondence 2009. Black has good compensation for the exchange and went on to win.

### **17...Kh7**

This forces White to release the tension.

### **18 Bxc7 Kxc7 19 f4**

White should consider 19 fxg4!? Nxg4 20 Nd5 (Black is doing well after 20 Nf5+ Rxf5! 21 exf5 Bxf5) 20...Rh8 21 Nf5+! (only now) 21...Bxf5 22 exf5 and now:

a) 22...Ngf6 23 fxg6 fxg6 24 Nxf6 and White is much better after 24...exf6 25 Qg2, but 24...Nxf6? 25 Rxc6+! Kxc6 26 Rg1+ is even worse.

b) 22...Nh6 23 Nxf6 (Black looks okay after 23 Rxh8 Qxh8 24 fxg6 fxg6) 23...Rxh1 24 Rxh1 exf6 25 Qg2 gxf5 26 Qxb7 when White has some advantage in a strange position.

### **19...Nc4 20 Bxc4 Rxc4 21 f5 e5 (Diagram 44) 22 Nde2**

Again White has an interesting possibility with 22 fxe6 fxe6 23 b3!? (instead 23 Rxc4?! e5 24 Nf5+ Bxf5 allows Black to take advantage of the pin along the fourth rank, while 23 Nde2 e5 24 Qxd6 Qe8 gives Black reasonable play) 23...Rc5 (after 23...Rxc3 24 Qxc3 e5 25 Ne2?! Rf3 gives Black counterplay, but 25 Nf5+! is strong) 24 Rxc4 gives White the initiative: for example, 24...e5? 25 Nf5+ Bxf5 26 exf5 Rxf5 27 Ne4 with an overwhelming position.

### **22...Rh8 23 b3!? (Diagram 45)**

This is a clever move. Instead 23 Rxc4 Bxf5 again exploits the pin along the fourth

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rank, while both 23 Qxd6 Bc6 24 Qxe5+ Qf6 and 23 fxxg6 fxxg6 24 Qxd6 Qe8 look okay for Black.

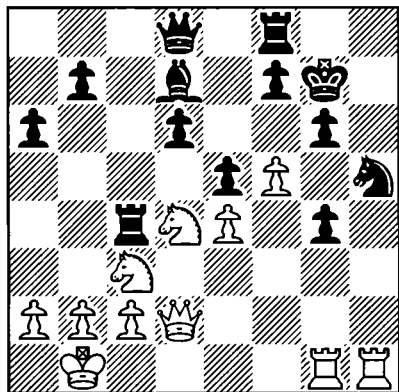


Diagram 44 (W)

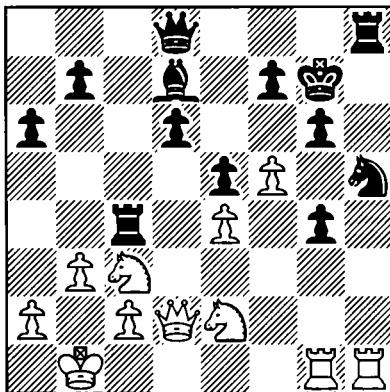


Diagram 45 (B)

### 23...Rc6?

This is a big mistake. Black could secure decent chances with 23...Rc8! and now:

a) 24 Qxd6? Bxf5! when Black is much better after 25 Qxe5+ f6 26 Qh2 Be6 or 25 Qxd8 Rcx d8 26 exf5 gxf5.

b) 24 fxxg6 fxxg6 25 Qxd6 Qe8 is unclear.

c) 24 Rxxg4 Nf6 25 Rgg1 Qe7 gives Black a solid position, although White has reasonable compensation for the pawn.

### 24 Rxxg4 Nf6 25 Rgg1! (Diagram 46)

Of course not 25 Rgh4? Nxe4, while 25 Rxh8 Qxxh8 26 Rg1 Qh6 gives Black a safe position. However, now Black is in trouble because the c6-rook is out of play and White intends the straightforward Ng3, Rxh8, and Rh1 with a strong attack.

### 25...Rxh1

Giving up the h-file looks a bit funny, but Black has to do something. After 25...b5, for example, White just plays 26 Ng3 and the attack proceeds unhindered.

### 26 Rxh1 Ng4

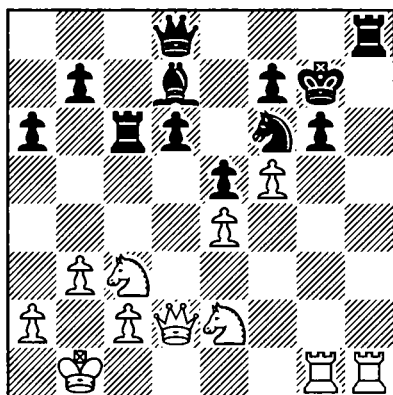
This also has an odd look, but it covers the h6-square. If 26...Nh5 27 Ng3 (or 27 Nd5) 27...Nf4 (27...Rxc3 28 Nxxh5+ gxxh5 29 Qxxc3 is also rather hopeless) 28 Qh2 wins.



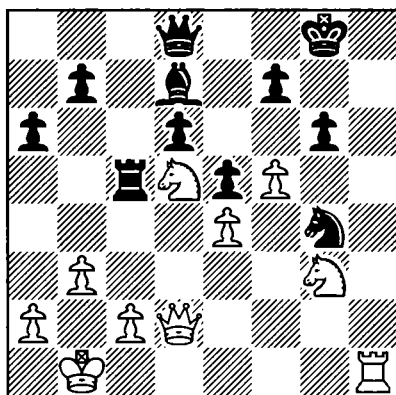
**27 Ng3 Kg8 28 Nd5**

White is much better as he dominates the board.

**28...Rc5 (Diagram 47) 29 Ne3!?**



**Diagram 46 (B)**



**Diagram 47 (W)**

Topalov does not even want to give Black the chance to play ...Rxd5. After 29 f6 Rxd5 30 exd5 Qxf6 31 Ne4 Qf3 32 Re1 Nf6 33 Nxd6 Nxd5 34 Rxe5 White is of course much better, but Black can keep fighting with 34...Bc6.

**29...Nxe3 30 Qxe3 Qf6 31 Qh6**

Ward points out the even stronger 31 Rh6! intending Nh5.

**31...Qg7 32 Qg5 f6 33 Qd2 Rc6**

After 33...g5 34 Nh5! (34 Qxd6 is good enough as well) 34...Qe7 (34...Qh8 35 Qxd6) 35 Qh2! with the idea of Nf4! is crushing.

**34 Kb2**

34 Qa5! wins quickly: for example, 34...b6 (or 34...Rc8 35 Qd5+ Kf8 36 fxg6) 35 Qd5+ Kf8 36 fxg6 Qxg6 37 Rh8+ Ke7 38 Nf5+ Bxf5 39 Qxc6.

**34...gxf5**

There is no salvation in 34...g5 35 Nh5 Qh8 (35...Qe7 36 Qd5+) 36 Rh3!, while 34...Be8 35 fxg6 (35 Qa5?! Qc7) 35...Bxg6 could be met by 36 Rh4! with the idea of Qh2 and Nf5 with a decisive attack.

**35 Qa5 (Diagram 48) 35...Qe7**

A better try was 35...b6 36 Qd5+ Kf8 37 Nxf5 Rxc2+! 38 Kxc2 Qg2+ and now:

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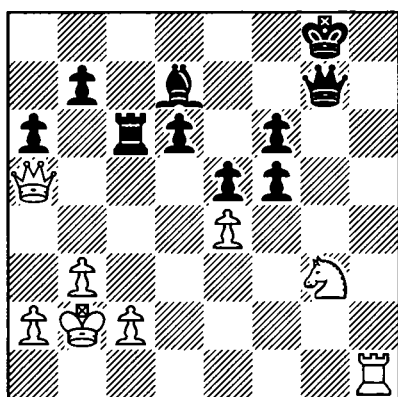
a) 39 Kc3? Qxh1 40 Qxd6+ Kg8 forces White to take a draw because 41 Qxd7? even loses after 41...Qc1+ 42 Kd3 (or 42 Kb4 Qc5+ 43 Ka4 Qa5 mate) 42...Qd1+.

b) 39 Qd2 Qxe4+ (not 39...Qxh1? 40 Qxd6+) 40 Kb2 Bxf5 41 Qxd6+ Kf7 and while White should win with 42 Qc7+ Black is at least still playing.

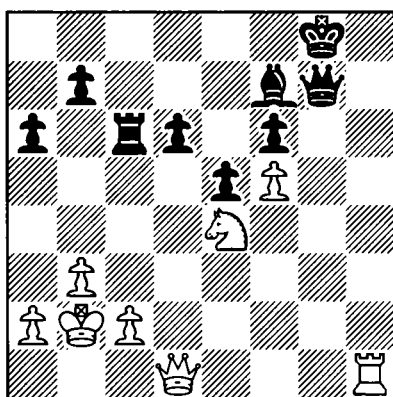
**36 Qd5+ Be6 37 Qd1!**

This fine move threatens Qh5. Instead 37 Nxf5 allows Black to fight on a bit with 37...Rxc2+!.

**37...Qg7 38 exf5 Bf7 39 Ne4 (Diagram 49)**



**Diagram 48 (B)**



**Diagram 49 (B)**

White's forces dominate the board and he quickly regains the material with interest.

**39...Kf8 40 Nxd6 Ke7 41 Nxb7 Qg8 42 Qd2 Rb6 43 Rd1 Qc8 44 Nd6 Qd7 45 Nxf7 Qxd2 46 Rxd2 Kxf7 47 c4 Ke7 48 Kc3 1-0**

## Conclusion

The prophylactic 12 Kb1 remains a threat to Black's classical move order with 10...Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5. Black should only consider 12...Nc4 if he is ready to go in for the speculative sacrifice of Game 12. Instead 12...Re8 looks okay after 13 h4 h5 14 Bh6, but Black's position is critical after 14 g4!. Carlsen's 12...a6 is very risky, but still looks playable.

# Chapter Three

## Topalov Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 (Diagram 1)

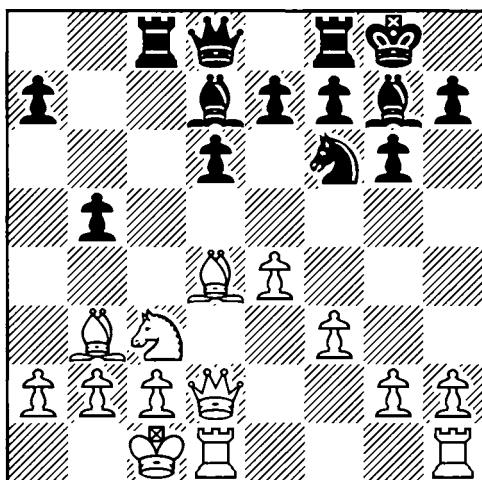


Diagram 1 (W)

Here Black avoids the main lines with 11...Ne5 and takes a completely different approach.

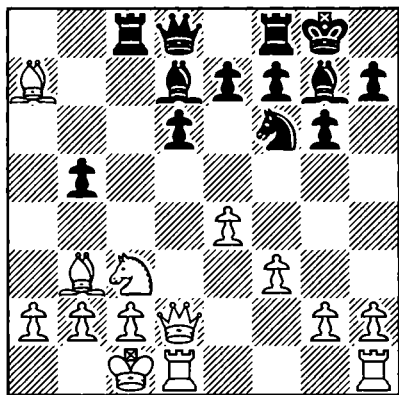
## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

This line was introduced into grandmaster play by Topalov. Black will simply advance his queenside pawns to create counterplay. This idea is hardly new (see Chapter 5), but previously Black had never tried this plan with the rook already on c8. White can now grab a pawn with 13 Bxa7, but this opens lines on the queenside for Black's heavy pieces, as we'll see in Game 16. White can also begin his own attack with 13 h4, which is covered in Game 17. The main continuation, however, is 13 Nd5. White does not mind exchanging pieces because he has more space and still maintains some attacking chances. Black is compelled to offer a pawn to fight for the initiative on the queenside. The consequences of this sacrifice are considered in Games 18 and 19.

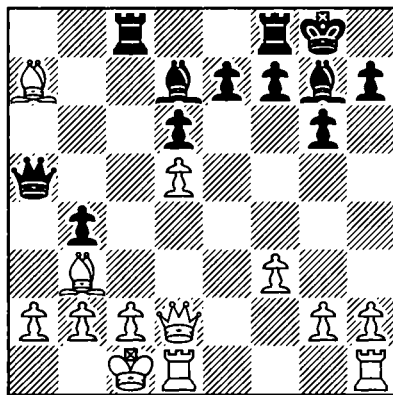
### **Game 16** **A.Czebe-E.Kislik** **Budapest 2009**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 13 Bxa7 (Diagram 2)**

This pawn grab is risky but logical. Practice has shown that moves like 13 Kb1 and 13 g4 are too slow after 13...a5!, while 13 e5 only leads to an even ending after 13...dxe5 14 Bxe5 Bc6.



**Diagram 2 (B)**



**Diagram 3 (W)**

**13...b4 14 Nd5**

The alternative is 14 Ne2 Qa5 15 Bd4 Ba4! which is a typical idea. Black needs to remove the defender of the a2-pawn in order to create any pressure along the a-

file. After 16 Bxa4 Qxa4 17 Kb1 Black has:

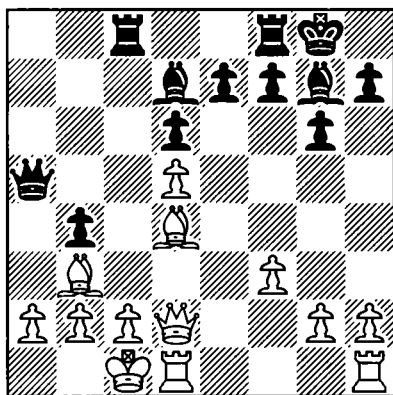
a) 17...Ra8 18 Nc1 Rfc8 19 Rhe1 Ne8 (19...Nd7 looks more direct) 20 Bxg7 Nxg7 21 f4 Ne6 22 f5 b3?! (22...Nc5 is a better try, but it is not easy for Black to create pressure and his own king is not well protected) 23 cxb3 Rxc1+ 24 Kxc1 Qxa2 25 Qc3 Nc5 26 Kd2 Nxb3+ 27 Ke3 Qa7+ 28 Kf3 Qb7 29 f6! and White had the upper hand in L.Kritz-S.Kudrin, U.S. League (internet) 2009.

b) 17...e5!? is more fun and 18 Be3 (or 18 b3 Qc6 19 Bb2 d5) 18...d5 gives Black good play. After 19 exd5?! Nxd5 20 Qxd5 (20 Bf2 e4 gives Black a huge attack) 20...Qxc2+ 21 Ka1 Qxe2 22 Qd2 Rc2 23 Qxe2 Rxe2 Black had a large advantage in the endgame in M.Azadmanesh-J.Van de Mortel Amsterdam 1998.

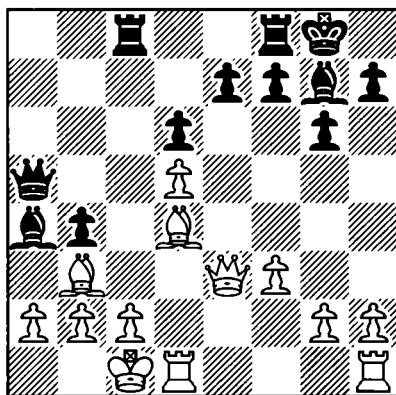
**14...Nxd5 15 exd5 Qa5 (Diagram 3) 16 Qe3!**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This move used to be considered a mistake, but in fact it is more accurate than 16 Bd4 (Diagram 4) which allows a fantastic shot.



**Diagram 4 (B)**



**Diagram 5 (B)**

Here 16...Rxc2+!? (instead 16...Ba4 17 Qe3 transposes to the main game, but 16...Bxd4 17 Qxd4 Ba4 is a good alternative) 17 Bxc2?! (17 Kxc2? loses after 17...Bf5+, so White should prefer 17 Qxc2! Rc8 18 Qxc8+ Bxc8 19 Kb1 with an unbalanced but approximately equal position) 17...Qxa2 18 Qf2 Rc8 19 Kd2? (19 Bxg7 was the only chance, but then both 19...Bf5 and 19...f6!? favour Black) 19...Rxc2+ 20 Kxc2 Qc4+ 21 Kd2 Bxd4 22 Qe2 Bc3+! 23 Ke3 Qc5+ gave Black a crushing attack in T.Bakre-B.Kadziolka, Pardubice 2004.

**16...Ba4!**



**NOTE: This is better than 16...Bf5?! 17 Rd2! which is the improvement that makes 16 Qe3 work.**

Otherwise Black has a winning attack after either 17 Bd4 Rxc2+! 18 Bxc2 Rc8 or 17 Kb1 Bxb2! 18 Kxb2 Rc3 19 Qf2 Qa3+ 20 Ka1 Rfc8. After 17 Rd2! Ra8 18 Bd4 Bxd4 19 Qxd4 Bd7 (19...e5 is probably a better chance to create some counterplay) 20 Re1 Ba4 we have:

a) 21 Bc4!? looks simple enough. Following 21...Bb5 22 Rxe7 Bxc4 23 Qxc4 Rfc8 24 Qb3 Qxa2 25 Qxa2 Rxa2 26 b3 White is up a pawn for nothing.

b) 21 Rde2 Bxb3 22 axb3 Rfe8 (better is 22...e5 23 dxe6 fxe6 with the idea 24 Rxe6 Qg5+ with counterplay) 23 Rxe7 Rxe7 24 Rxe7 Qa1+ 25 Kd2 Qf1 26 Re2 when Black clearly did not have enough for two pawns in P.Negi-D.Reinderman, Wijk aan Zee 2010.

**17 Bd4 (Diagram 5)**

There is no other reasonable move. White must shield his king from the Dragon bishop.

**17...Rc7!?**

This is a flexible move. Black keeps his options open as he can double rooks on either the a- or c-file. Other moves are less convincing:

a) 17...Bxb3 18 Qxb3 Rc7 19 Bxg7 Kxg7 20 Rhe1 Ra8 21 Re4 Rac8 22 Rd2 Qa7 gave Black some compensation in J.Shahade-T.Kosintseva, Bled 2002, but in this kind of position Black should only be able to hope for a draw.

b) 17...Ra8 18 Rhe1 Bxb3 19 Qxb3 Qxa2 20 Qxa2 Rxa2 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Rxe7 Ra1+ 23 Kd2 Ra2 24 Rb7 Rxb2 25 Kc1 Ra2 26 Rxb4 Re8 27 Kb1 and White remained a pawn up in J.Geller-A.Moskalenko, Voronezh 2007.

**18 Bxg7 Kxg7**

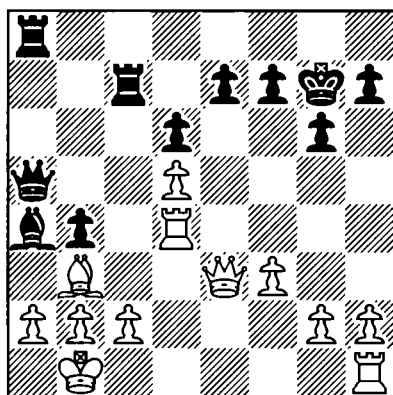
This is the kind of move one usually plays without thinking, but Black could consider 18...Bxb3!? 19 Qxb3 (19 axb3?! Kxg7 20 Qd4+ Kg8 21 Rhe1 Rfc8 gives Black a strong attack) 19...Kxg7 when he has good counterplay against White's pawns on c2, a2, and d5.

**19 Kb1**

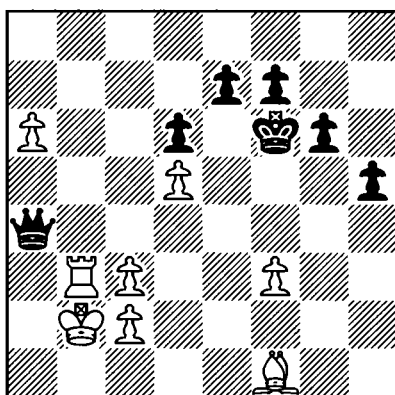
Here White could consider 19 c4!? because 19...bxc3?? abruptly clears the fourth rank and loses a piece to 20 Qd4+.

**19...Ra8 20 Rd4? (Diagram 6)**

This looks sensible, but it allows a shot. Instead 20 Rhe1 Bxb3 (or 20...Rca7) 21 Qxb3 Rca7 is fine for Black. If 22 Kc1 Qc5! attacks the a-pawn and 23 Kb1? loses to 23...Rxa2 24 Qxa2 Rxa2 25 Kxa2 Qxc2.



**Diagram 6 (B)**



**Diagram 7 (B)**

**20...Rc3! 21 Qxc3**

White has to give up the queen, because 21 bxc3 Bxb3 is crushing.

**21...bxc3 22 Rxa4 Qd8**

Materially speaking White is not so badly off, but Black's queen will prove to be very strong.

**23 Rxa8**

Instead 23 Re4 cxb2 24 Rhe1 Ra7 25 Kxb2 is given by Velickovic in *Informant*, who claims that White has compensation. This seems a bit optimistic after 25...Qb6 intending ...Kf8. If 26 Rxe7? Qd4+ 27 Kb1 Rxe7 28 Rxe7 Qg1+ picks up White's king-side pawns.

**23...Qxa8 24 bxc3 Qa7 25 a4 Qf2 26 Rd1**

White tries to cut off the black queen in an unusual way. Getting the rook behind the passed pawn looks insufficient after 26 Kb2 Qxg2 27 Ra1 Qxh2 28 a5 Qf2 29 a6 Qa7 when Black should win. The queen is generally not an ideal blockader, but she still has some scope here and Black is ready to advance his h-pawn.

**26...Qxg2 27 Kb2 Qxh2 28 a5 Qe2 29 Rd3 Qf2 30 Rd4 Qf1 31 Bc4**

If 31 Rd3 Black can just allow White to queen with 31...h5 32 a6 h4 33 a7 h3 34 a8Q h2 and Black wins.

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

### **31...Qh3 32 a6 Qd7**

More accurate was 32...Qc8, as Black will not lose a tempo should the white rook come to b7.

### **33 Bf1 h5 34 Rb4 Kf6 35 Rb7 Qa4?**

This allows White a surprising resource. Instead 35...Qc8 should still win.

### **36 Rb3? (Diagram 7)**

White should just play 36 a7!. It is hard for Black to make progress, as the rook is ideally placed defending the a7-pawn while tying Black's king to e7, which can't thus support the h-pawn.

### **36...Qd7?**

Black can still win by shifting to the dark squares with 36...Qa5!: for example, 37 Ra3 Qb6+ 38 Rb3 Qf2 39 Ra3 (39 Rb7? Qxf1 40 a7 Qa6) 39...Qa7 with a similar situation to that described in the note to White's 26th move.

### **37 Rb7 Qa4 38 Rb3 Qd7 39 f4 h4 ½-½**

The last couple of moves do not make sense, as Black is winning again after 39...h4 40 Rb7 Qc8 with the idea of ...Qa8 and ...h3. Maybe the game really ended in a repetition with 39 Rb7.

## **Game 17** **G.Papp-D.Smerdon** **Paks 2007**

### **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 13 h4 (Diagram 8)**

White disregards Black's queenside demonstration and gets on with his attack. This move has perhaps been a little underestimated, but Black should be okay with correct play.

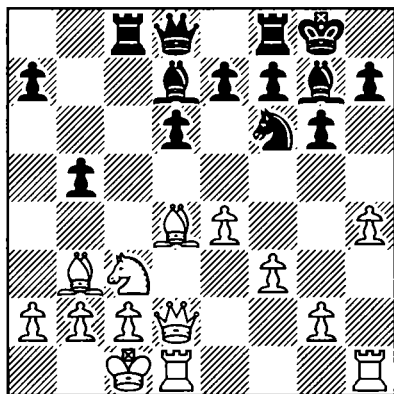
### **13...a5 14 h5**

White should not be too hesitant, else he can easily get into trouble:

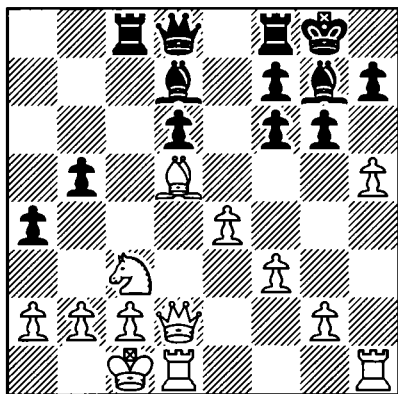
a) 14 Bxf6?! Bxf6 15 h5 Bg7 (but not 15...g5?! 16 Nd5 a4 17 Nxf6+ exf6 18 Bd5 Rc5 19 a3 when White was clearly better in P.Negi-G.Guseinov, Abu Dhabi 2005) 16 hxg6 hxg6 is already better for Black: 17 Rh2 (after 17 g4? a4 18 Qh2 Re8 White was losing material in P.Oberweis-T.Kulhanek, Kemer 2007) 17...e6! (but not 17...a4? 18 Rdh1! when White wins after 18...axb3 19 Rh8+ Bxh8 20 Qh6 or 18...Re8 19 Rh8+ Bxh8 20 Rxh8+ Kxh8 21 Qh6+ Kg8 22 Qxg6+ Kh8 23 Bxf7, mating) 18 Qxd6



Qf6 19 Rdh1? (instead 19 Qxd7 loses to 19...Qf4+; relatively best was 19 Rhh1, although Black has a strong attack after 19...b4) 19...Rfd8 20 a3 Bc6 21 Qc5 Bxe4 was G.Halvax-M.Neubauer, Linz 2011. Black has regained the pawn and has a raging attack.



**Diagram 8 (B)**



**Diagram 9 (B)**

b) 14 a4? allows a typical tactic: 14...bxa4 15 Nxa4 Bxa4 16 Bxa4 Rc4! 17 Bb3 (17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 Bb3 Qb6! is crushing) 17...Nxe4 18 Qe3 Rxd4! (this is a clever way to exchange knight for dark-squared bishop) 19 Rxd4 Ng3 which regains the exchange and leaves Black a pawn up in a position where the opposite-coloured bishops certainly favour him.

c) 14 a3 is not so bad: 14...b4 15 axb4 axb4 16 Nd5 (White must avoid 16 Nb1? Qa5 with the idea of ...Ba4, but 16 Na2 Be6 17 Bxe6 fxe6 18 Qxb4 is not so clear) 16...Nxd5 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 and now 18 Qxd5 Kg8! with the idea of ...Be6 and ...Rc5 looks good for Black, so White should prefer 18 exd5 Kg8!, transposing to Game 19.

#### **14...a4 15 Bxf6 exf6**

It is too dangerous to play 15...Bxf6?!. After 16 hxg6 e6 White cannot play 17 Qh6? Bg5+, while both 17 gxh7+ Kh8 and 17 Qxd6 axb3 18 Qxd7 Qxd7 19 Rxd7 b4 are not so clear, but 17 e5! looks problematic for Black.

#### **16 Bd5 (Diagram 9)**

Instead 16 Qxd6 axb3 17 Qxd7 Qa5 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 Qd5 gives Black a pleasant choice between 19...bxc2 20 Rd2 f5 and 19...Rxc3!? 20 bxc3 Qa3+ 21 Kd2 bxa2.



**NOTE:** This is an unusual structure which we will see again in Chapter 5. Black's kingside pawns have been doubled and he has weaknesses along the d-file, but he does have the bishop pair and his advanced queenside pawns will disrupt White's castled position.

### 16...f5

This looks the most reliable. Black does not hurry to commit himself on the queenside. There are a couple of alternatives:

a) After 16...b4 (there is no need to rush this move – Black loses possibility of ...a3 to undermine the c3-knight) 17 Ne2 f5 (17...b3 18 axb3 axb3 19 Bxb3 does not lead anywhere) 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 Nd4 fxe4 20 fxe4 results have favoured White.

b) 16...a3 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Bb3 Be6 19 Bxe6 (Black has good play after 19 Kb1 Bxb3 20 cxb3 axb2 21 Nxb5 f5 intending ...Rc1+) 19...fxe6 20 Nxb5 Qb6 21 Nxa3 f5 22 c3 Rc6 23 exf5 gxf5 24 Rde1 (the immediate 24 g4! looks better) 24...d5 25 g4 f4 26 Qd3 was drawn in J.De Amorim Neto-V.Cordeiro, correspondence 1998, but this does not look very convincing for Black.

### 17 hxg6 hxg6 (Diagram 10)

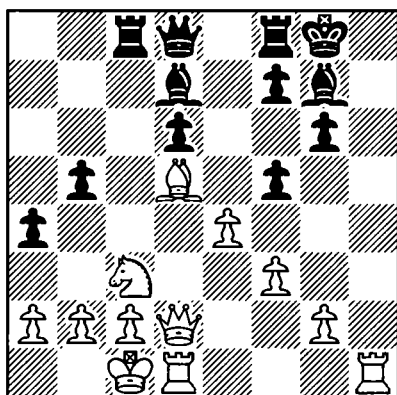


Diagram 10 (W)

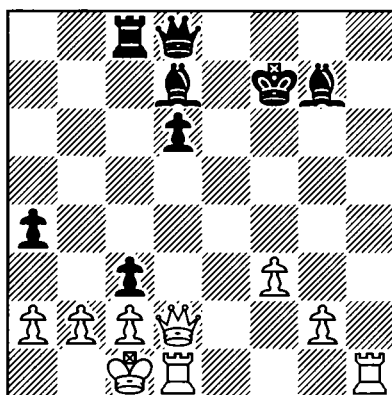


Diagram 11 (W)

### 18 g4

White tries to open more lines on the kingside. This looks critical. Instead 18 Rh2?! a3 shows the advantage in delaying ...b4. White does have a sharp alternative in 18 exf5 b4 19 fxg6 (after 19 Ne4 Bxf5 Black is fine: for example, 20 g4? Bxe4 21 fxe4 Qf6 and Black's attack is much stronger) 19...bxc3 20 gxh7+ Rxf7 21 Bxf7+

Kxf7 (**Diagram 11**) which is very unclear.

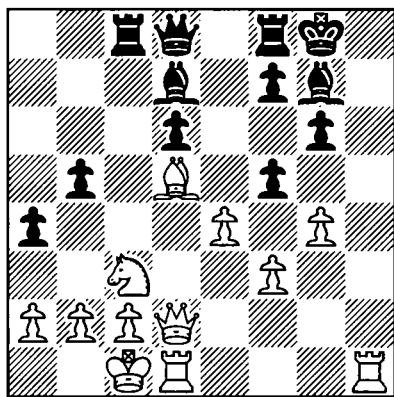
Some possibilities:

a) 22 Qxd6?? loses quickly. 22...cxb2+ 23 Kb1 Bf5! 24 Qf4 Qf6! 25 Qxa4 Qc3 26 Rd3 Qxd3! 0-1 I.Ortiz Suarez-D.Vocaturro, Havana 2011.

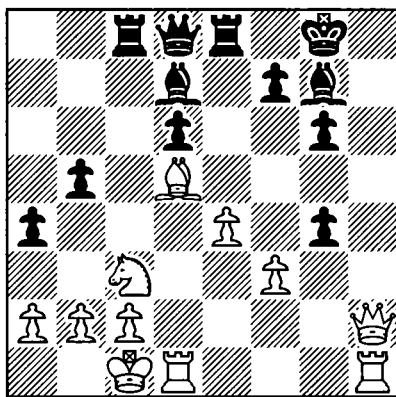
b) 22 Qf4+ Qf6 23 Qxf6+ Bxf6 24 Rh7+ Bg7 25 b3 axb3 26 axb3 Bf5 27 Rh5 Bg6 28 Rb5 Re8 gives Black some practical chances according to Jones. The bishop pair and slightly uneasy white king at least offset White's nominal material advantage.

c) 22 bxc3 Rxc3 23 Qf4+ Kg8 24 Qxd6 probably leads to a draw after 24...Qc8!. Jones gives one possibility: 25 Rd2 Bf5 26 Qd8+ Qxd8 27 Rxd8+ Kf7 28 Rd5! Rxc2+ 29 Kd1 Bg6 30 Rd7+ Kg8 31 Rd8+ Kf7 32 Rd7+ with a repetition.

Returning to 18 g4 (**Diagram 12**):



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (W)**

### **18...fxg4**

This looks necessary. Other moves have been played, but look suspicious:

18...Rxc3? 19 bxc3 does not do much, while both 18...b4?! 19 Qh2 Re8 20 Qxd6! with the idea of Qxg6 and 18...a3 19 Qh2 Re8 20 Kb1! look suspicious for Black.

### **19 Qh2**

White can also try 19 fxg4 whereupon 19...Be6 (White's attack is too strong after 19...Bxg4? 20 Rdg1) 20 Bxe6 fxe6 21 Qh2 Qg5+ 22 Kb1 Qe5 23 Qh7+ Kf7 24 Rh6 (Black also has counterplay after 24 Rhf1+ Ke7 25 Qxg6 a3!) 24...g5 25 Rg6 a3 26 Rxd6 Rxc3! 27 bxc3 Qxc3 was agreed drawn in M.Elent-H.Muehlenweg, correspondence 2005. After 28 Kc1 Qe1+ 29 Rd1 Qe3+ White has to allow a repetition with

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

30 Rd2 Qe1+ because 30 Kb1? would lose to 30...Qc3 31 Kc1 Qa1+ 32 Kd2 Rd8+ 33 Ke3 Rxd1.

### 19...Re8 (Diagram 13) 20 Qxd6

This leads to a complicated ending where Black's chances are not worse. The alternative is 20 fxcg4 and now:

a) 20...Qg5+ 21 Kb1 Re7 (21...Be6 looks more natural) 22 Rdf1 Be8 23 Rf3 (if 23 a3 b4! 24 axb4 a3) 23...b4 24 Nd1 and here Black should try 24...a3!, because 24...b3?! 25 axb3 axb3 26 Rxb3 Ba4 was met with 27 Rc3! Qxg4? 28 Rxc8+ Qxc8 29 Qh7+ Kf8 30 Qh8+! when White won a piece in A.Valsecchi-D.Vocaturro, Bratto 2007.

b) 20...Be6! 21 Kb1 b4 22 Rdf1!? (Black is doing well after 22 Bxe6 Rxe6 23 Nd5 Rxe4 or 22 Nxa4 Bxd5 23 Rxd5 Rxe4 24 Qxd6 Qxd6 25 Rxd6 Rxc4) 22...Qg5 (not 22...bxc3? 23 Qh7+ Kf8 24 Qxg6 with a winning attack) 23 Qf2 Qe5 24 Nxa4 Ra8! 25 Qxf7+!? (Black has good compensation after 25 Bxe6 Qxe6 26 b3 Ra5 according to Jones) 25...Bxf7 26 Bxf7+ Kf8 27 Bd5+ Ke7 28 Rf7+ Kd8 29 Bxa8 Re7 30 Rxe7 Kxe7 31 Bd5 Qf4! and only Black has chances.

### 20...Be6 21 Bxe6 Qxd6 22 Bxf7+ Kxf7 23 Rxd6 (Diagram 14)

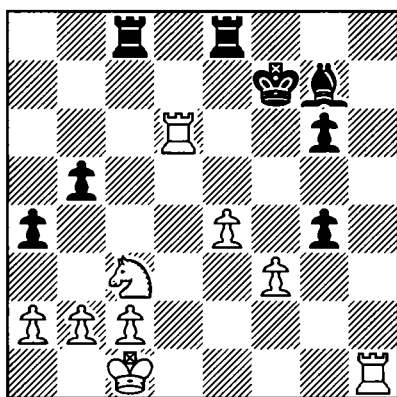


Diagram 14 (B)

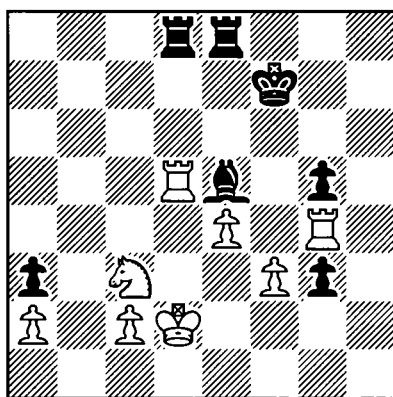


Diagram 15 (B)

### 23...a3

This is not bad, but 23...gxf3! looks even better. After 24 Nxb5 (or 24 Rd3 Bxc3 25 bxc3 Rxe4 26 Rxf3+ Kg7 when Black has the better side of a likely draw) 24...Rb8 25 Nd4 f2 Black keeps his f-pawn: for example, 26 Rf1?! Bh6+ 27 Kd1 Be3 28 Ke2 Rxe4.

### 24 Nxb5 Bxb2+ 25 Kd2 g3

### *Topalov Variation: 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4*

This is a tricky move, but there was nothing wrong with 25...gxf3.

#### **26 Rh7+ Bg7 27 Rh4**

The point of Black's play is revealed after 27 Rd7+ Re7 28 Rxe7+ Kxe7 29 Nd4 g2 30 Ne2 Kf8 31 Rh2 Rd8+ when White must be careful. It looks like 32 Ke3 Bd4+! 33 Kf4 Rc8 34 Rxc2 Rxc2 35 Kg3 holds White's position together though.

#### **27...g5**

This is not bad, but 27...Rh8 is active and good.

#### **28 Rg4 Be5 29 Rd5 Rcd8 30 Nc3 (Diagram 15) 30...Rxd5+?!**

Black should have enough for the pawn after 30...Bf4+ 31 Kd3 Ke6, as the g4-rook is incarcerated.

#### **31 Nxd5 Rh8?**

And this is just too much. Necessary was the humble 31...Rg8.

#### **32 Rxc5 Rh2+ 33 Kd3 Bb8 34 e5**

Now Black's bishop is cut off and White is winning.

#### **34...Rh1 35 f4 Ba7 36 Ke4**

Even 36 Rxc3 Rd1+ 37 Ke4 Rd4+ 38 Kf5 Rxd5 39 Rxa3 should win, but of course the text is simpler.

#### **36...Bf2 37 Kf5 Ra1 38 Nc3**

Or 38 e6+ with mate in 8.

#### **38...Rc1 39 e6+ Kf8 40 Nd5 Rxc2 41 e7+ 1-0**

### *Game 18* **V.Kotronias-I.Sipos** Hungarian League 2009

#### **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 O-O 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 O-O-O Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 13 Nd5 (Diagram 16)**

This positional continuation is the main line. White meets Black's flank attack by playing in the centre.

#### **13...Nxd5 14 Bxc7**

The alternatives are less threatening:

a) 14 Bxd5 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 and now 15...Qc7 16 c3 a5 was seen in the variation's debut in N.Short-V.Topalov, Novgorod 1996. Black seems okay, but another idea is 15...a5 with the plan 16 e5 e6 17 Be4 d5 18 Bd3 Qg5+ 19 Rd2 f6 with counterplay.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

b) 14 exd5?! Bxd4 15 Qxd4 a5 16 a3 b4 looks similar to the main line, but Black has not lost time with his king. After 17 axb4 (instead 17 a4 Qe8! was good for Black in A.Shirov-V.Topalov, Moscow 2001; this is a typical idea for Black and the reason White cannot simply try to close the queenside) I like Rogozenko's idea of 17...Rb8! (of course 17...axb4 is possible as well), intending 18 bxa5 Qxa5 when Black's attack is much faster than usual.

### 14...Kxg7 15 exd5

White plays this way in order to create pressure down the e-file. Practice is shown that 15 Bxd5 a5 is not dangerous for Black.

### 15...a5 16 a3 (Diagram 17)

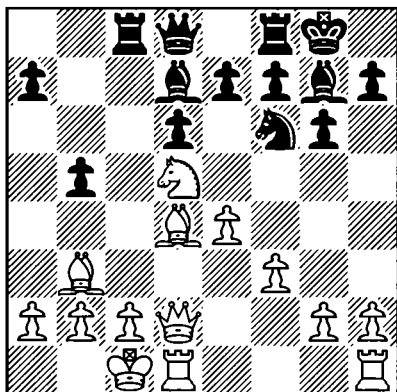


Diagram 16 (B)

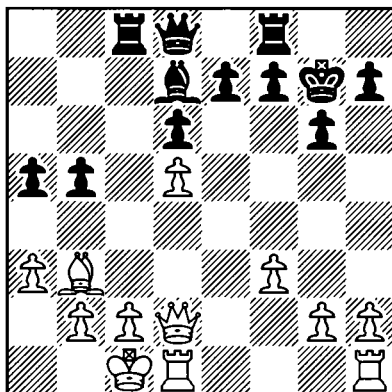


Diagram 17 (B)



**WARNING:** White has more space, so Black cannot play too passively. Even though the position has simplified a bit, with opposite-side castling the initiative is still important. Here Black should be ready to offer a pawn rather than risk being squeezed.

### 16...b4

This pawn sacrifice is the main idea in the Topalov Variation, although its timing is important. In Game 19 we examine the current favourite 16...Kg8!?. The alternative is to avoid the pawn sacrifice altogether with 16...Qb6. This looks normal enough, but results have strongly favoured White after 17 Rhe1! (but not 17 h4?

*Topalov Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4*

a4 18 Ba2 as Black has the thematic shot 18...Rxc2+! 17...Rfe8 18 g4 which contains the d7-bishop, although 18 Re2 is a good alternative. After 18 g4 Black has tried:

a) 18...b4 19 a4 Qc5 20 Kb1 e5 21 dxe6 Bxe6 22 h4! Bxb3 23 cxb3 Rxe1 24 Rxe1 was V.Anand-S.Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 2001. This may not look like much, but White's king is safer and his position is easier to play.

b) 18...Rc7 19 Kb1 Bc8 20 Re3 Qa7 21 Rde1 left Black with a passive position in B.Macieja-R.Rogozenko, Istanbul Olympiad 2000.

c) 18...Rc5 was Black's latest try, but after 19 h4 h6 20 Qd4+ Kg8 21 h5 g5 22 Rd2 Qc7 23 f4! White cracked open Black's position in A.Grignorian-K.Georgiev, Rijeka 2010.

**17 axb4**

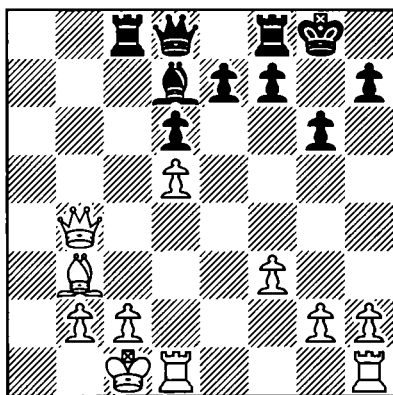


**NOTE:** Again 17 a4 is well met by 17...Qe8!. This is a typical idea that crops up in the Topalov Variation.

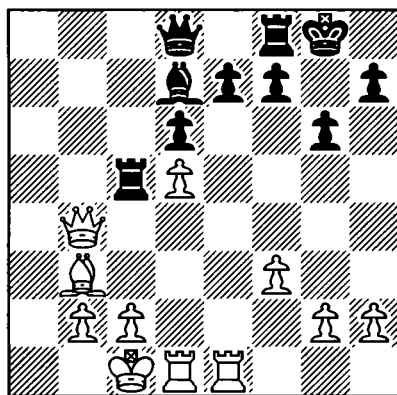
**17...axb4 18 Qxb4**

Taking the pawn is logical and critical, but White can also play 18 h4!? when 18...Kg8! (better than 18...Qa5 19 Qd4+ Kg8, as we will see) leads us into Game 19 after all.

**18...Kg8! (Diagram 18)**



**Diagram 18 (W)**



**Diagram 19 (W)**



**TIP: When your king is exposed to checks, it is often a good idea to simply tuck it away, so you do not have to calculate checks at every turn. This prophylactic move was pioneered by the Azeri players Mamedov, Gashimov, and Guseinov.**

### **19 Rhe1**

White brings his last piece to the centre. Very often he will try to evacuate his king from the queenside, but the immediate 19 Kd2?! is premature after 19...e5! 20 Ke2 (Black has good chances after 20 dxe6 Qg5+ 21 Kd3 Bxe6 when White's king is exposed) 20...e4 (20...Bf5!? was an attractive option) 21 Rd4? (better was 21 Kf2, but White's position is risky) 21...Qg5 and Black won quickly in L.Kritz-G.Guseinov, Nakhchivan 2003.

### **19...Re8**

Black has also tried to do without protecting the e7-pawn. Indeed, the alternative 19...Rc5!? (**Diagram 19**) has been used very successfully by Pogonina, albeit in rapid play.

White has:

a) 20 Rd4?! is too routine and allows Black to execute her main idea: 20...Qa8! 21 Rxe7 (even worse is 21 Kd1? Rb8 22 Qd2 Qa1+ 23 Ke2 Qxb2 24 Kf1 Rxb3 25 cxb3 Bb5+ 0-1 G.Swath-N.Pogonina, Beijing (rapid) 2008) 21...Rb8 22 Qa3 Ra5 23 Qxd6 Ra1+ 24 Kd2 Qa5+ 25 c3 (giving up a piece is better than 25 Ke3 Qe1+ 26 Kd3 Rd1+ 27 Kc4 Rc8+ 0-1 A.Gara-N.Pogonina, Beijing (rapid) 2008) 25...Rxb3 26 Rb4 Rxb4 27 cxb4 Qa7 28 Qf4?! (28 Rxd7 Qd4+ looks scary, but I cannot find more than a perpetual check) 28...Rd1+! was good for Black in N.Azarova-N.Pogonina, Beijing (rapid) 2008.

b) 20 Rd3! is better, as White's queen will not be cut off along the fourth rank. After 20...Qa8 21 Rxe7 Bf5 (if 21...Rb8 22 Qf4! shows one point of White's 20th move) 22 Rc3 Qa1+ 23 Kd2 Qxb2 24 Rxc5 dxc5 25 Qc3 (this wins, as does 25 Qxc5 Rc8 26 Qe3 Rxc2+ 27 Bxc2 Qxc2+ 28 Ke1) 25...Qa3 26 Bc4 White won quickly in S.Kaplan-P.Wang, South Padre Island 2009.

Returning to 19...Re8 (**Diagram 20**):

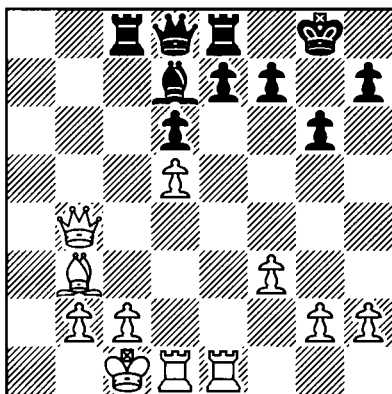
This is the big important position for the assessment of Black's pawn sacrifice. White has tried three different moves here and each one has been praised as the best move at one time or another.

### **20 Rd4**

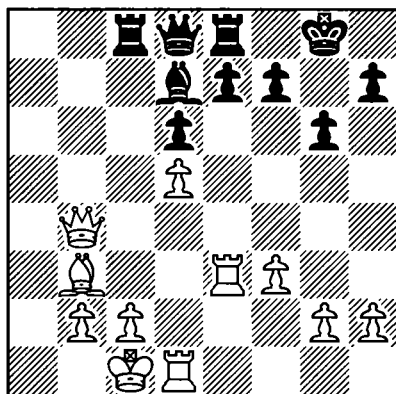
This is the main line which has been favoured by Kotronias and Maćieja, amongst



others. It was also recommended by De la Villa. There are two important alternatives:



**Diagram 20 (W)**



**Diagram 21 (B)**

a) 20 Rd3 was suggested by Aagaard in the early stages of development of the Topalov Variation, but this move has not scored very well. After 20...Rb8 White has:

a1) 21 Qd4?! Qa5 hits the rook on e1 and threatens ...Rb4. After 22 Kd1 (Aagaard also mentions 22 Red1? Rb4 23 Qc3 Rc8 24 Qe1 Rc5) 22...Rb4 Black has the initiative.

a2) 21 Qd2 Qb6 22 Kd1 Bb5 23 c4 (this gains time, but limits the scope of White's bishop and softens up on the b-file) 23...Bd7 24 Ree3 Qc5 25 Ke1 Rb4 26 h4?! h5 27 Kf2 Reb8 28 Kg3 e5 29 dxe6 Bxe6 gave Black excellent play in I.Cheparinov-V.Gashimov, Calvia Olympiad 2004.

a3) 21 Qc3 Qb6 22 Kd1 Bb5 23 Rd4 Rec8 24 Qe3 Qa5 and then:

a31) 25 Re4 Rc7 26 Qd4 Rbb7 27 R4e3 Ba6 28 Rc3 Rb4 29 Qxb4 Qxb4 30 Rxc7 Qd4+ 31 Kc1 Qf2 32 Rxe7 Qg1+ 33 Kd2 Qd4+ 34 Kc1 Qg1+ 35 Kd2 Qd4+ with a draw was P.Smirnov-V.Gashimov, Istanbul 2003.

a32) 25 Rh4 was suggested by Aagaard. It makes sense to try and soften up Black's kingside a bit. Black still seems to have reasonable play though: for example, 25...h5 26 Re4 Rb7?! 27 g4 (this is double-edged as White loosens his own position) 27...hxc4 28 fxc4 Qa1+ 29 Qc1 Qa7 30 R1e3 Rbc7 31 Qd2 Bc4 32 Bxc4 Rxc4 when Black had good play for the pawn and went on to win in S.Kristensen-A.Alexander, correspondence 2005.

b) 20 Re3 (**Diagram 21**) is a relatively new try and this was Pavlovic's recommendation.



**KEY DEVELOPMENT: White must try to turn away Black's initiative. By moving this rook instead of the d1-rook, White avoids the possibility of a tempo-gaining ...Qa5, as the rook will not be hanging on e1.**

After 20...Rb8 (or 20...Rc5 21 Rde1 Qa8 when Pavlovic suggests 22 Qd4; instead 22 Rxe7 looks critical, but after 22...Rxe7 23 Rxe7 Qa1+ 24 Kd2 Qf1 Black has decent play because taking the bishop allows a perpetual check) 21 Qd4 Qa5 White has: b1) 22 Rde1 Rb4 23 Bc4 (but not 23 Qd1? Rc8) 23...Bb5 24 Qc3 Bxc4 25 Rxe7 Rxe7 26 Rxe7 is very interesting. White has sacrificed a piece and Black's king is under attack while his pieces do not coordinate well. I still think Black can hold things together, however:

b11) 26...Qa4 27 Re4 f5 28 Rh4 Qa1+ 29 Kd2 Rb8 (perhaps 29...Rb7 is better, as after 30 Rxc4 Re7 the seventh rank is defended) 30 Rxc4 and White eventually coordinated his pieces and won with the extra material in Z.Ivanovic-A.Alexander, correspondence 2005.

b12) 26...Qd8! solves Black's problems: 27 Re4 (not 27 Qxb4? Qxe7 28 Qxc4 Qe1 mate) 27...Ra4 28 Rxc4 Ra1+ 29 Kd2 Qg5+ gives Black enough play: for example, 30 Kd3 Rd1+ 31 Ke2 Qxg2+! 32 Kxd1 Qf1+ 33 Kd2 (or 33 Qe1 Qxc4) 33...Qf2+ 34 Kd3 Qxf3+ 35 Kd4 Qf4+ with a perpetual check.

b2) 22 Bc4! (Pavlovic calls this a novelty, but it had been played a few times before in correspondence games) 22...Bb5 (22...Rb7 23 Ra3 Qc7 was tried a couple of times without success) 23 Ra3 Qc7 (Black could consider 23...Qd8!? with the possibility of playing ...e5 when the queen will have access to the kingside) reaches an important position (**Diagram 22**).

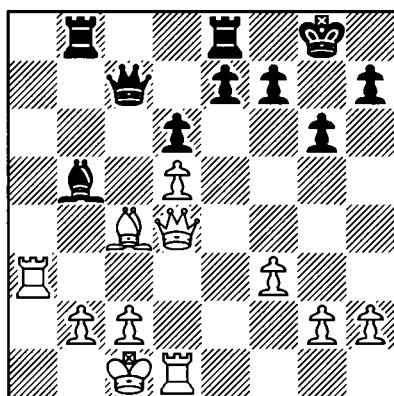
Now:

b21) 24 Bxb5 Rxb5 25 Rdd3 was Pavlovic's recommendation, but after 25...Rc5! Black seems to have enough counterplay. After 26 Rac3 Rxc3 27 Qxc3 Qa7! Black's queen will penetrate to the kingside, while 26 Rdc3 Rxc3 27 Rxc3 (or 27 Qxc3 Qb6 28 Qe3 Qb5) 27...Qa5 also gives Black enough play. White should probably play 26 Rd2, but after 26...Ra5 27 Rxa5 Qxa5 it will not be easy to make progress.

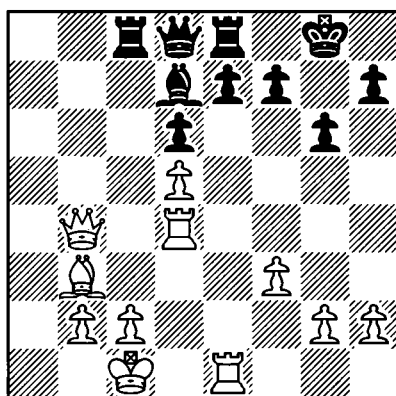
b22) 24 Bb3! looks more dangerous: 24...Ra8 (or 24...Rec8 25 Kd2!) 25 Rxa8 Rxa8 26 Kd2 h5 and now White enjoyed success with 27 Ke3 Bd7 28 Kf2 in M.Boada Marti-G.Gerhards, correspondence 2007, and 27 h3 Ra5 28 Ke3 Bd7 29 g4 h4 30 Kf2 in

L.Borisovs-G.Gerhards, correspondence 2007. Both games happened to be played in the same tournament.

So 20 Rd3 has not been very successful, although it looks reasonable, while 20 Re3 looks rather problematic for Black. Now we go back to the most common move 20 Rd4 (**Diagram 23**).



**Diagram 22 (W)**



**Diagram 23 (B)**

### **20...Rc5!?**

The alternative is 20...Rb8 and then:

a) 21 Qd2 Ra8 (after 21...Qb6 22 Kd1 Bb5 23 Rde4 Qa7 24 h4 h5? 25 g4 White developed a strong attack in B.Macieja-T.Kulhanek, Czech League 2003) 22 Kd1 Bb5 (this move makes it harder for the white king to get to the kingside) 23 Qc3 Rc8 24 Qb4 Rc5 25 c4 Bd7 26 h4 (after 26 Ke2 e5 27 dxe6 Bxe6 Black has decent play) 26...Qc7 27 h5 was V.Kotronias-M.Cebalo, Reggio Emilia 2005. Here Black should try 27...e5 28 dxe6 Bxe6 29 hxg6 hxg6 30 Qc3 Rh5 (or 30...Re5).

b) 21 Qc3 Qb6 22 Kd1 Bb5 23 Rde4 (not 23 Rb4?? Be2+ A.Timofeev-R.Mamedov, Dubai 2003) 23...Qa7 24 h4 (Pavlovic mentions 24 Qd4 Qa1+ 25 Kd2 Qa5+ 26 Qc3 Qa7 when it is not easy for the white king to migrate to the kingside) and now instead of 24...Ra8 25 Qd4! Qd7 26 Kd2 which saw White consolidating in I.Madl-Z.Remete, Hungarian League 2006, Pavlovic gives 24...Rec8! 25 Qd4 Qa1+ 26 Kd2 Qa5+ 27 Qb4 Qa7 when it is difficult for White to make progress.

### **21 Kd1**

This is a typical way to try and slide away, but White has tried a couple of other moves too:

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

a) 21 Kd2 is similar. The king looks a little more exposed here, but invasions on the first rank will not come with check. A couple of examples:

a1) 21...Qc7 22 Rde4 (White must avoid the typical trick 22 Ke2? Rb8 23 Qd2 Rxb3!) 22...Bf5 puts pressure on c2. After 23 Qa4 Bd7 24 Qd4 Bf5 White cannot really avoid a repetition.

a2) 21...Qa8 is more ambitious: 22 Rde4 and now instead of 22...Rb5?! 23 Qd4 Qa5+ 24 Qc3 Qd8 25 Qe3 when White consolidated in S.Klimov-S.Solovjov, St Petersburg 2005, Black should play 22...Rb8! 23 Ra1 (not 23 Qd4 Rxb3! 24 cxb3 Rxd5) 23...Qxa1 24 Qxb8+ Rc8 25 Qb7 Bf5 26 Rxe7 Qg1 with sufficient play.

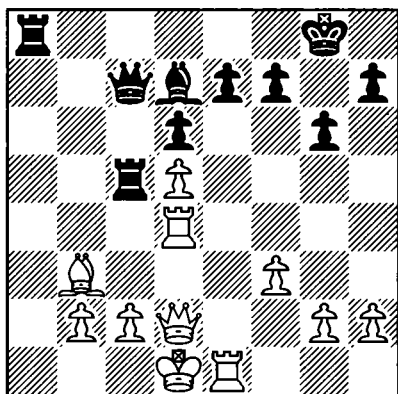
b) 21 Rde4!? postpones the evacuation. Black has tried:

b1) 21...Bb5 22 R1e3 Qa8 23 Qa3 Qb7 24 Kd2 Qc7 (24...f5!?) 25 Qb4 and White was coordinating his pieces rather well in E.Berg-P.Carlsson, Malmo 2006.

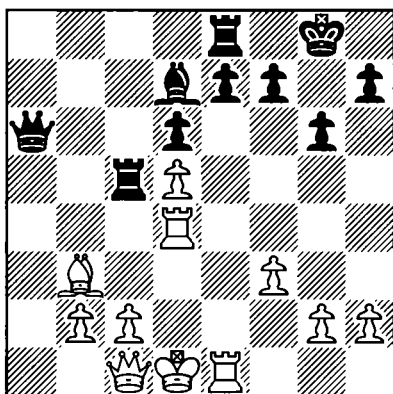
b2) 21...Bf5 22 R4e3 Qa8 23 Rc3 Rb8 24 Qa4 Qxa4 25 Bxa4 Rxc3 26 bxc3 was L.Aroshidze-N.Mamedov, Sort 2006, where White was up a doubled pawn. The ending is rather unpleasant, although Black managed to hold.

### 21...Qa8

The alternative is to play 21...Qc7. Then after 22 Qd2 (again not 22 Ke2? Rb8 23 Qd2 Rxb3) 22...Ra8 (**Diagram 24**) White has:



**Diagram 24 (W)**



**Diagram 25 (W)**

a) 23 Ke2 Bf5 (Black should certainly consider 23...e5) 24 c3 Qb7 was V.Kotronias-N.Ristic, Cutro 2004. Here De la Villa gives 25 Rb4! Rb5 26 Bc4 Rxb4 27 cxb4 Rb8 28 b3 Qxb4 29 Qxb4 Rxb4 30 Kd2 Kf8 31 Kc3 Rb7 32 Ra1 when White is better.

b) 23 Re3! is suggested by Macieja. The point is that after 23...e5 (Black is probably better off probing with 23...Ra1+ 24 Ke2 Bf5 25 c3 Qb7) 24 dxe6 Bxe6 White has 25 Rxe6! fxe6 26 Rxd6 with more than enough for the exchange.

## **22 Qd2**

Instead 22 Ke2 was recommended by Khalifman. After 22...Qa7 23 Qd2 Rb8 24 Qe3 Bf5 25 Rd2 Black can try 25...e5!? (instead 25...Qc7 26 Rc1 Rcb5 27 Ra1 Rc5 28 Kd1 saw White grind out a win in 139 moves O.Korneev-P.Carlssohn, Dos Hermanas 2006, but I do not think Black was so badly off at this stage) 26 Kf2 h5 when he had typical counterplay in G.Papp-S.Fruebing, Gibraltar 2009.

## **22...Qa1+ 23 Qc1 Qa6 (Diagram 25)**

The queen is active here. Instead 23...Qa7?! 24 Rb4 Bf5 25 c3 Qa6 26 Qd2 h5 27 Ba4 Rec8?! (27...Ra5 is a better try) 28 Rxe7 left Black with little to show for the pawns in B.Macieja-T.Petrosian, Stepanakert 2004.

## **24 c3?!**

These positions can be very difficult to judge. It is hard to tell whether a move like this is useful or simply loosening. In this case it proves to be the latter. Instead 24 Qh6 Qa1+ was agreed drawn in V.Zivkovic-T.Petrosian, Fuegen 2006, and 24 Rde4?! Bf5! 25 Rxe7? loses to 25...Bxc2+!. So the best way for White to continue is with 24 Rb4 when Black has:

a) 24...Bf5 25 c3 Ra5?! 26 Bc4 Qa8 27 Qe3 e5 28 Ke2! saw White coordinate his pieces and safely move his king to safety in V.Kotronias-E.Moradiabadi, Thessaloniki 2007.

b) 24...e5! 25 dxe6 Bxe6 26 Bxe6 Rxe6 27 Kd2?! was P.Bobras-C.Koepke, Bad Wiessee 2007. Here 27...Rd5+ 28 Kc3 Re2! would have given Black a strong attack. If White tries 27 Rxe6 instead, Black has 27...Qf1+! 28 Re1 Rd5+ 29 Qd2 Rxd2+ 30 Kxd2 Qxg2+ 31 Re2 Qxf3 with at least equal chances, so perhaps White's best would be 27 c4, even though Black keeps good compensation for the pawn.

## **24...Rb8 25 Bc2 (Diagram 26) 25...e5!**

This break can also be difficult to assess. Here White's king is exposed and his pieces are not well coordinated.

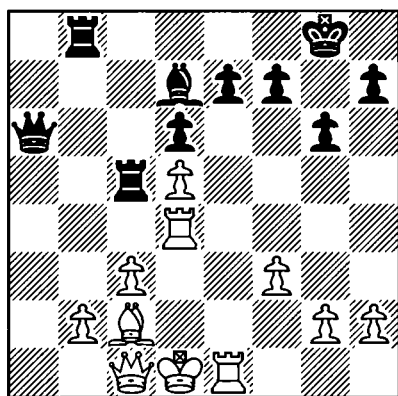
## **26 dxe6**

White may prefer to avoid this, but the d-pawn needs protection and 26 Rd2 Ra5! 27 Bd3 Bb5 gives Black a huge initiative.

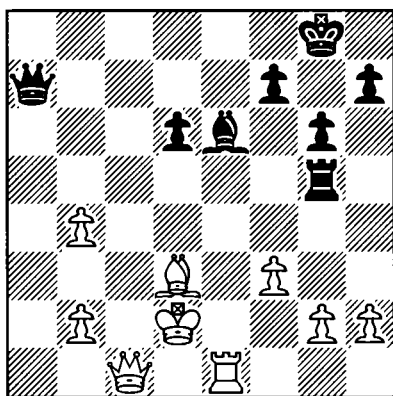
## **26...Bxe6 27 Kd2 Ra5 28 Bd3 Qa7 29 Rb4**

Worse are 29 Ke2? Ra2 and 29 Ke3?! Rd5.

**29...Rxb4 30 cxb4 Rg5 (Diagram 27)**



**Diagram 26 (B)**



**Diagram 27 (W)**

Black has excellent counterplay. With precise defence White may be able to hold the balance, but with his king exposed it is difficult to play such a position in practice.

**31 g3 Qf2+ 32 Kc3 Rd5**

32...Re5!? 33 Rxe5 dxe5 with the idea of ...Qd4+ looks promising as well.

**33 Qe3 Qxh2 34 Be4 Rb5 35 Qg1 Qh5 36 Qd4**

It is natural to try to centralize, but better defensive chances were offered by 36 Bc6 Rb8 37 b5.

**36...d5**

Black keeps the tension. The endgame that arises after 36...Rb8 37 Qxd6 Rc8+ 38 Kd3 Qg5! 39 Ke2 Rd8 40 Qf4 Qxf4 (or 40...Bc4+ 41 Kf2 Rd2+ 42 Kg1 Qxf4 43 gxf4 Rxb2 44 Rb1) 41 gxf4 Rb8 should prove tenable for White because of his active king.

**37 Bd3 Rb8 38 g4 Qh2 39 Ba6 Qc7+ 40 Kb3 Bd7 (Diagram 28)**

Now Black threatens 41...Qa5!.

**41 Ra1 Qg3 42 Be2 Qh2 43 Bd3?**

This allows Black to execute a nice manoeuvre.

**43...Qd2! 44 Qc3 Qf4**

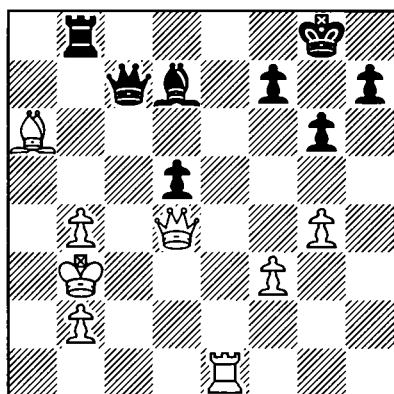
Now Black controls the d4-square.

**45 Ra7 Be6 46 Ka4 Qe3 47 Ra5 d4 48 Qc2 Qe1**

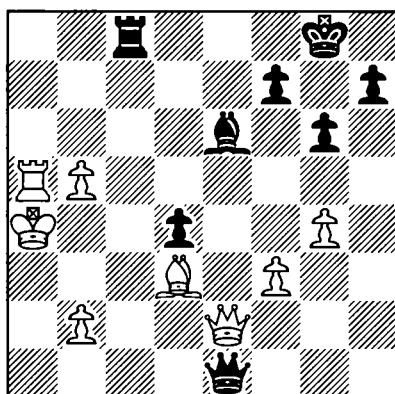
Black goes for the king. Also winning was 48...Qxf3.

**49 b5 Rc8 50 Qe2 (Diagram 29) 50...Bb3+!**

This wins the exchange and the game.



**Diagram 28 (W)**



**Diagram 29 (B)**

**51 Kxb3 Qxa5 52 Qe5 Qb6 53 Bc4 Qd8 54 Bd5 Qd7 55 Bc6 Qa7 56 Qd6 Qb6 57 Kc4 Rd8 58 Qf4 d3 59 Qd2 Qd4+ 60 Kb3 Rd6 61 f4 Kg7 62 f5 Qxg4 63 fxg6 Qe6+ 64 Kb4 hxg6 65 Kc5 Qe5+ 66 Kb6 Qd4+ 67 Kc7 Re6 68 Qc3 Qxc3 69 bxc3 Rxc6+ 0-1**

*Game 19*  
**E.Berg-M.Lokander**  
Stockholm 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 13 Nd5 Nxd5 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 exd5 a5 16 a3 Kg8!? (Diagram 30)**



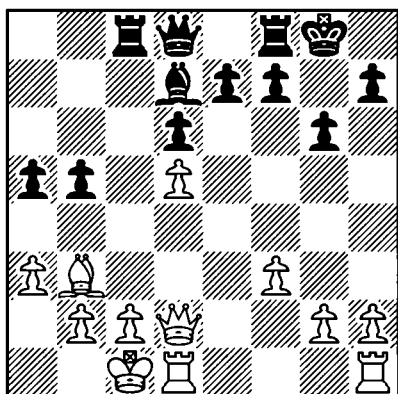
**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Here Black makes the prophylactic king move before committing to a pawn sacrifice. He may still offer the pawn at a favourable moment, so there are transpositional possibilities between this move and the immediate 16...b4.

**17 h4!?**

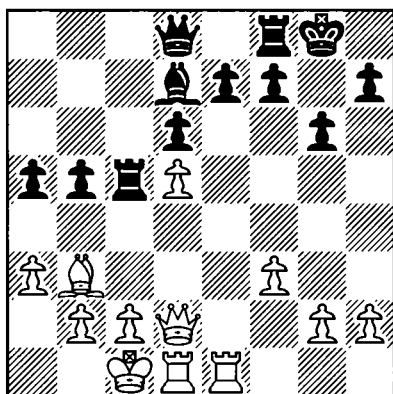
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

White plays directly for an attack. Instead 17 g4 is slower and allows Black to sacrifice the pawn with 17...b4 18 axb4 axb4 19 Qxb4 Rb8. Black has a better version of the play we saw in the last game as White has played g4 instead of Rhe1. After 20 Qc3 (or 20 Qd4 Qa5) 20...Qb6 21 Bc4 Rfc8 22 b3 e5! 23 dxe6 Bxe6 24 Qd4 Bxc4 25 Qxb6 Rxb6 26 bxc4 Rxc4 Black had regained the pawn and had a slight initiative in the ending in K.Kachkin-V.Baklanov, correspondence 2006.

White's main alternative is the typical 17 Rhe1. Now 17...b4 18 axb4 axb4 19 Qxb4 would just transpose to the last game, while 17...Re8?! would be a mistake as then ...b4 can be met with a4! because ...Qe8 is no longer possible. Khalifman also mentions 17...Bf5 18 g4 a4 19 Bxa4 Bxg4 20 fxg4 bxa4 21 Re4 when White is much better. Therefore Black should play 17...Rc5! (**Diagram 31**).



**Diagram 30 (W)**



**Diagram 31 (W)**

Black makes another useful move and keeps the option of the pawn sacrifice. White has

not been able to prove much here:

a) 18 g4 b4 19 axb4 axb4 20 Qxb4 Qa8 21 Kd2 (after 21 Rxe7 Qa1+ 22 Kd2 Qxb2 23 Rxd7? Rxc2+ 24 Kd3 Rfc8 Black has a crushing attack) 21...Rb8 and now:

a1) 22 Qf4 e5 (22...Rxb3 23 cxb3 Qxd5+ also looks good) 23 dxe6 Bxe6 gives Black good play, as 24 Rxe6 can be met by 24...Rxb3!.

a2) 22 Qe4 Qa5+ 23 Ke2 e5! intends ...f5 and 24 dxe6 allows 24...Re5.

a3) 22 Ra1 allows a draw: 22...Rxd5+ 23 Ke3 Re5+ 24 Kd2 (but not 24 Kf2 Qxf3+! 25 Kxf3 Rxb4) 1/2-1/2 S.Karjakin-A.Shirov, Bilbao 2009.



b) 18 Re3 b4! and now:

b1) 19 a4!? allows Black's next thematic move, but White hopes to gain some time: 19...Qe8 20 Qe2 (after 20 Rde1 Bxa4 21 Rxe7 Qb5 Black has a strong attack without being down material) 20...Bxa4 21 Rxe7 and here Pavlovic gives 21...Qxe7! 22 Qxe7 Bxb3 23 Rd2 Rfc8 when Black is doing fine. The ending arising after 21...Qb5 22 Qxb5 Bxb5 23 Ra7 a4! 24 Bxa4 Re8! looks tenable as well.

b2) 19 axb4 axb4 20 Qxb4 Qa8! and now:

b21) 21 Bc4 Bf5 22 Ra3 Qc8 23 b3 Qc7 24 Ra6 Rb8 25 Qa4 e5 26 dxe6 Bxe6 27 Ra7 Qc8 28 Qa6 was drawn here in G.Van den Haak-L.Coplin, correspondence 2009. 28...Bxc4 is totally level.

b22) 21 Rxe7 Qa1+ 22 Kd2 Qxb2 23 Qf4 Bf5 gives Black more than enough for the pawn: 24 Ke2?! Qf6 25 Qe3 Rc3 26 Qa7 Bxc2 27 Bxc2 Rxc2+ 28 Rd2 Rxd2+ 29 Kxd2 Qg5+ 0-1 was F.Poetz-C.Lovrinovic, Austrian League 2010.

### **17...b4**

Black needs to create counterplay. A couple of other ideas:

a) 17...h5 really seems to be asking for it and Jones gives 18 g4 a4 19 Ba2 hxg4 20 h5 Bf5 (or 20...gxf3 21 Rdf1) 21 c3 g3 22 Rdg1 when White's attack is very strong.

b) 17...Qb6 looks reasonable. 18 Qd4 (after 18 h5 there is 18...a4!, intending 19 Ba2 Rxc2+!; following 19 hxg6 fxg6 20 Qh6 Rf7 21 Ba2 Rxc2+! 22 Kxc2 Bf5+ 23 Rd3 Qc5+ 24 Kb1 Bxd3+ Black has an extra pawn, although he still must take some care) 18...Rc5 (instead 18...Qxd4 looks fine) was S.Karjakin-D.Vocaturro, Turin Olympiad 2006. Here Jones suggest the obvious 19 h5 which looks good for White.

### **18 axb4**

Again White can try to gain time by offering the a-pawn with 18 a4 Qe8 19 h5 Bxa4, but this only leads to a draw after 20 hxg6 (20 Qh6 g5! 21 Qxg5+ Kh8 is not clear, but I do not think Black is worse) 20...fxg6 21 Rxh7 Kxh7 22 Rh1+ Kg7 23 Qh6+ Kf7 24 Qf4+ Kg7 25 Qh6+ 1/2-1/2 N.Djukic-M.Roganovic, Cetinje 2010.

### **18...axb4 (Diagram 32) 19 Qd4!?**

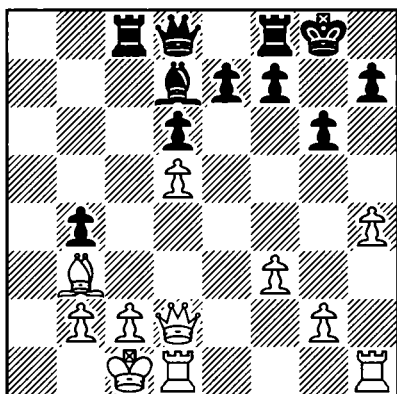
This looks like the best move order for White. Instead 19 Qxb4 Rb8 is similar to 17 g4 above – Black has a good version of the pawn sacrifice. The main alternative is the obvious 19 h5. Black usually goes for 19...Qa5 here, but I believe this move is premature after 20 Qd4 (**Diagram 33**).



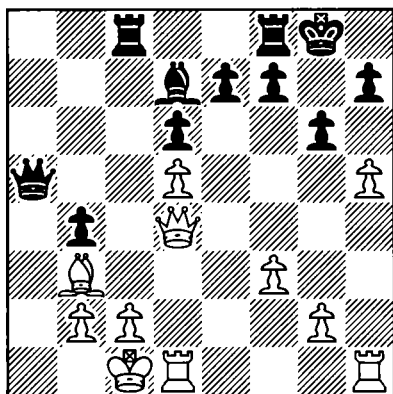
**WARNING: Here Black has tried two moves in practice, but one loses by force!**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

We have:



**Diagram 32 (W)**



**Diagram 33 (B)**

a) 20...Ba4? 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 Rxh7! is crushing. After 22...Kxh7 23 Rh1+ Kg8 24 Rh8+ Kf7 25 Qf4+ Kg7 26 Qh6+ Kf7 27 Qh7+ Ke8 (Black also get routed after 27...Kf6 28 Qh4+ Kf5 29 Qe4+ Kf6 30 Rh7!) 28 Bxa4+! (the most accurate) 28...Qxa4 29 Qxg6+ Kd7 30 Qe6+ Kc7 31 Qxe7+ White wins.

b) 20...Bf5 and now:

b1) 21 hxg6 Bxg6 (White was a little better after 21...fxg6 22 Kd2 Rc5 23 Rc1!? Qb6 24 Qh4 Rf7 25 Rhe1 Qb7 26 Re3 in B.Bok-M.Mostertman, Haarlem 2010) 22 Kd2 e5!? (22...Rc5 transposes to variation 'b2') 23 dxe6 Rxc2+ 24 Bxc2 b3+ 25 Ke3 bxc2 26 exf7+ Rxf7 27 Ra1 Re7+ 28 Kf2 Qc5! 29 Qxc5 dxc5 30 Rhc1 c4 and White was unable to win in D.Pavlovic-M.Roganovic, Cetinje 2010.

b2) 21 Kd2 Rc5 22 hxg6 (after 22 Ke3 Bxc2! 23 Bxc2 Rxc2 24 hxg6 e5! White's king was the more exposed in I.Saric-O.Kanmazalp, Sarajevo 2010, because 25 dxe6 is met by 25...Qg5+) 22...Bxg6 23 Ke3! Qb5 (White also kept a pull after 23...f6 24 Rd2 Qc7 25 Rc1 Ra8 26 Kf2 in B.Adhiban-Y.De Rover, Amsterdam 2011) 24 Kf2 sees White secure his king and he can use his space advantage to build up on the king-side. One game ended quickly after 24...Rfc8 25 Kg3 Qd7 26 Qe3 R5c7 27 Rd4 Qb5? 28 Rg4 Rf8? 29 Qh6 and 1-0, P.Negi-P.Konguvel, Mangalore 2008.

Instead of 19...Qa5, Pavlovic suggests 19...Bf5 20 hxg6 Bxg6 21 Qd4 Rc5! with counterplay. After 22 Kd2 Black can play 22...Qb6!.

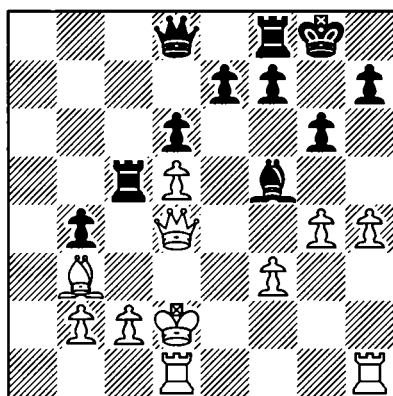
**19...Bf5**

Instead 19...Qa5 20 h5 transposes to 19 h5 Qa5 above.

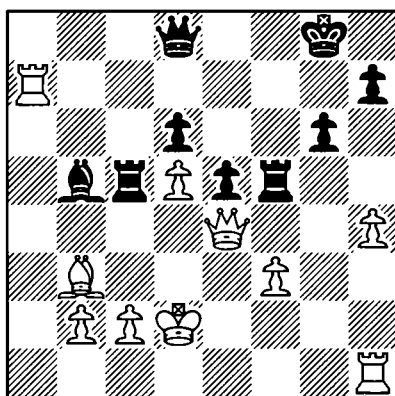
## 20 Kd2

After 20 h5 Bxc2! (20...Qa5 transposes to variation 'b' above and was the actual move order of Bok-Mostertman) 21 Bxc2 b3 22 hxg6 Rxc2+ 23 Kb1 fxg6 forces White to find 24 Rxh7 Kxh7 25 Rh1+ Kg8 26 Rh8+ Kf7 27 Qf4+ Kg7 28 Qh6+ Kf7 with a draw.

## 20...Rc5 21 g4 (Diagram 34)



**Diagram 34 (B)**



**Diagram 35 (W)**

Instead 21 h5 is natural. Then 21...Qa5 would again transpose back to variation 'b' in the notes to White's 19th move, but I think Black has better options in 21...Qc7!? and 21...Qb6!?

## 21...e5!

Once again we see this thematic strike.



**TIP: Do not forget the old adage, 'a flank attack is best met by play in the centre'. White's king is not comfortable anywhere and Berg, a strong grandmaster, has trouble keeping control over his opponent who is more than 600 points lower rated.**

## 22 Qxb4

White may as well take the pawn now. Instead 22 dxe6 Bxe6 gives Black has the initiative and it is too late to grab the pawn because 23 Qxb4? Qc7! gives Black a strong attack.

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

### **22...Bd7 23 Ra1**

After 23 h5 Qg5+ 24 Ke2 e4! cracks White's position open.

### **23...Qf6**

Black intends ...e4! so White must physically prevent it.

### **24 Qe4 Qd8!?**

Black simply retreats and prepares ...f5, knowing his opponent will not want to repeat the position. Black could also play 24...Rfc8.

### **25 Ra6 Bb5**

Instead 25...f5 26 Qb4 Bb5 27 Ra5 Qb6 28 g5 allows White to keep the f-file closed.

### **26 Ra7 f5 27 gxf5 Rxf5 (Diagram 35)**

Black has excellent compensation for the pawn. Berg must have been rather frustrated here, as his opponent is not playing anywhere near the level that was 'promised' by the wall chart.

### **28 Qe3 Rf4**

This is not bad, but 28...Qf8! looks even better.

### **29 h5 Qg5 30 Kc1 Bd3!?**

Black combines attack and defence.

### **31 Kb1**

Not 31 Qxd3? Rd4+.

### **31...Bf5?!**

Black finally begins to slip a little. Instead 31...Qg2 32 Rc1 Bf5 would give him excellent play.

### **32 Ra8+ Kf7 33 Ra7+ Kg8 34 Ra8+ Kf7 35 hxg6+ Bxg6 36 Ra4! Qf6 37 Rxf4 exf4 38 Qf2 (Diagram 36)**

White has finally consolidated his position, but the battle is not over yet.

### **38...Rc7 39 Re1 Bf5 40 Qd2?! h5! 41 Kc1 Re7! 42 Rh1 Bg6**

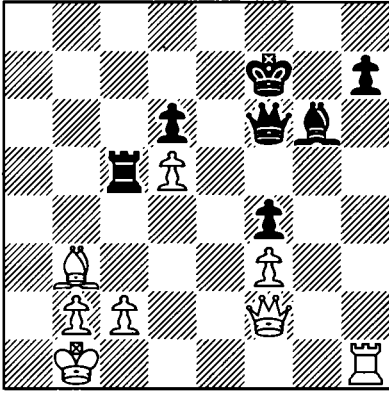
Or 42...Ra7 43 Kb1 h4, which also looks okay.

### **43 Ba4 Rb7 44 Bb3 (Diagram 37) 44...Rxb3?**

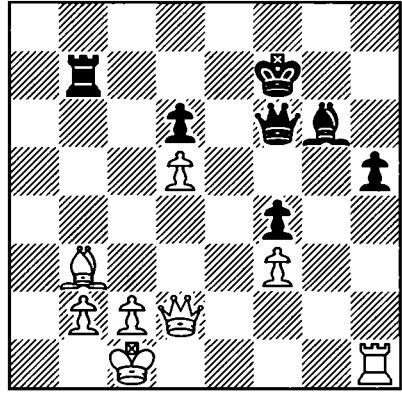
Black gets too excited after proving himself a very worth adversary. Instead 44...Ra7 45 Kb1 Rb7 repeats and the only way for White to avoid a draw is with the funny-looking self pin 46 Ka1 Ra7+ 47 Ba2.

### **45 cxb3 Qf5**

This looks strong and in fact there is only one way for White to avoid a draw.



**Diagram 36 (B)**



**Diagram 37 (B)**

#### **46 Kd1!**

And of course he finds it. The position is still tricky, but the Berg is relentless and essentially plays perfectly to convert his material advantage.

**46...Qb1+ 47 Qc1 Qd3+ 48 Ke1 Qxf3 49 Qc7+ Kg8 50 Qd8+ Kg7 51 Qe7+ Kh6 52 Qf8+ Kh7 53 Qe7+ Kh6 54 Rg1 Qxd5 55 Qf8+ Kh7 56 Qxf4 Qe6+ 57 Kf2 Qxb3 58 Qd4 Qc2+ 59 Kg3 Qb3+ 60 Kh2 Qe6 61 b4 d5 62 Rg5 Qe2+ 63 Rg2 Qe7 64 Qf4 d4 65 b5 Qb7 66 Qd6 Be8 67 b6 Qf7 68 Qc7 Bd7 69 b7 Qe7 70 Qg3 1-0**

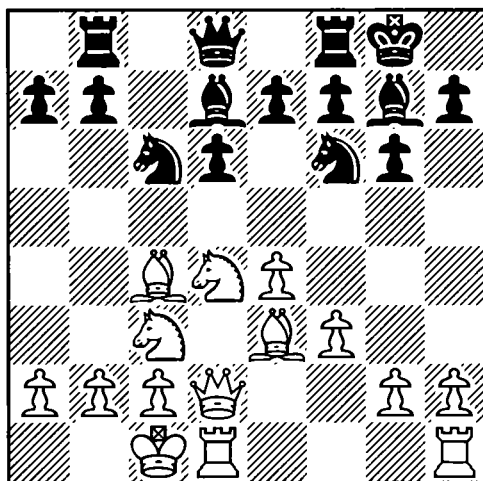
## **Conclusion**

The Topalov Variation is one of the youngest systems in the Dragon, but Black is holding his own both theoretically and in a practical sense. The pawn grab with 13 Bxa7 and the aggressive 13 h4 both leave Black with good play, so the positional 13 Nd5 is the only critical continuation. The pawn sacrifice with 16...b4 is under some pressure because of both the traditional 20 Rd4 and the more recent 20 Re3, but the prophylactic 16...Kg8 is holding up well.

# Chapter Four

## Chinese Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rb8

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8 (Diagram 1)



**Diagram 1 (W)**

This is the Chinese Variation, named by FM Luc Henris while studying this system and living in China. While this line had been seen before, it was only after Henris

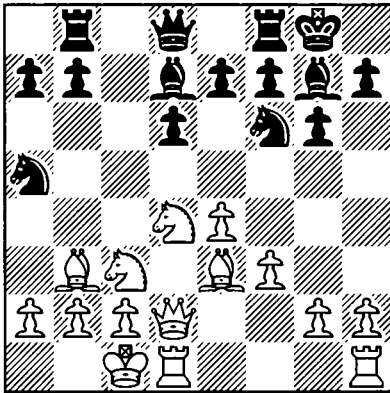
published his analysis in *New in Chess Yearbook 62* (2002) that the line began to blossom. The Chinese Variation has been played by such players as Carlsen, Radjabov, and Ivanchuk, but I must admit that I am a bit suspicious of this line. It is interesting that each of the aforementioned players has played the variation only once, perhaps counting on it for surprise value.

Essentially Black's plan is to play ...b5, ...Na5, and ...Nc4. If White captures this knight, Black will play ...bxc4 and hope to create pressure on the b-file. I find this to be a bit one-dimensional and positionally questionable, and while Black's resources are not limited to delivering mate on b2 (or a2, as we shall see), I think White has several promising lines.

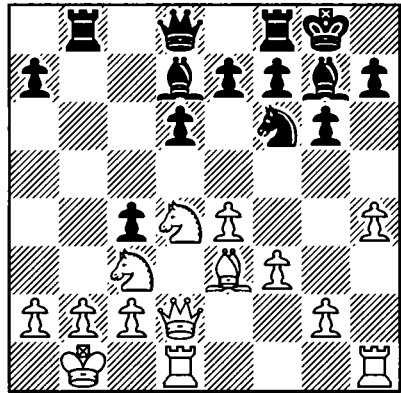
*Game 20*  
**M.Carlsen-T.Radjabov**  
Bilbao 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8 11 Bb3**

Theory has crystallized towards approving this move as the most flexible and best.  
**11...Na5 (Diagram 2)**



**Diagram 2 (W)**



**Diagram 3 (W)**

This has completely eclipsed the alternative 11...Ne5. Black is intending ...Nc4 and going to the edge of the board is the best way to head there. After the alternative 11...Ne5 Black has lost the option of playing ...Nxb3 and he must also watch out for

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

f3-f4 possibilities.

### **12 Kb1**

With this move White anticipates Black's plans and prepares a tidy little safety plan with Kb1-a1 and Rb1.

### **12...b5 13 h4**

White must time his moves carefully. If 13 Bh6 Bxh6 14 Qxh6 Black has a plan which is thematic to the Chinese Variation: 14...e5! 15 Nde2 Nxb3 16 cxb3 (or 16 axb3 b4 with similar play, although here c2 could end up a target) 16...b4 17 Nd5 Nxd5 18 Rxd5 Be6 and Black has good play. The backward d-pawn is easily covered and Black has a strong bishop.

White can play 13 g4 Nc4 14 Bxc4 bxc4 15 Ka1 Qa5!? (instead 15...Qb6 16 Rb1 would be similar to the main game) 16 Nd5 Nxd5!? (this idea is known from some lines of the King's Indian Defence) 17 Qxa5 Nxe3 18 Qc3 Nxd1 19 Rxd1 Rfc8 was F.Nijboer-M.Leon Hoyos, Metz 2010. Black has good compensation for the queen.

### **13...Nc4 14 Bxc4 bxc4 (Diagram 3) 15 Ka1**

This is consistent. Instead 15 g4 Qb6 forces a concession from White:

a) We have seen that it is not always so bad to play 16 b3 in the Dragon, but if White wants to play this way there is no need to play Kb1 so early. After 16...Qc7 17 h5 Rfc8 18 Nd5 Nxd5 19 exd5 cxb3 20 axb3 Qc3 Black's bishop pair gives him good chances and following 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 Qxc3 Rxc3 23 Rhe1 Bf6 24 Re2 a5 he clearly had the upper hand in J.Zawadzka-I.Videnova, Eretria 2011.

b) 16 Qc1 avoids weakening the pawns, but looks passive: 16...Qa5 17 Ka1 Rb6 (Black wants to double rooks and perhaps play ...Ra6, but the rook is a bit vulnerable here; Jones suggests 17...Rb7 or 17...h5) 18 g5!? (18 Nde2?! Rb7 19 g5?! Nh5 20 Qd2 Rfb8 21 Rb1 Ng3! 22 Nxg3 Rxb2 23 Bd4 Rxa2+ 24 Nxa2 Rxb1+ 0-1 was R.Bitoun-W.So, Tagaytay City 2010) 18...Rfb8! 19 gxf6 Rxb2 20 Nde2 Bxf6 21 Bd4 e5!? (Jones gives 21...Bxd4 22 Rxd4 Qa3 23 h5 when White is better, even though it is not so simple) 22 Be3 Qa3 23 Bg5 Bxg5 24 hxg5 Ba4! with unclear play.

### **15...h5**

Black plays along the lines of the Soltis Variation. Now if White wants to break through to the black king, he will have to sacrifice a pawn or two. Black can also activate his queen:

a) 15...Qb6 16 Rb1 Qa6 (16...Qa5 has been played a few times as well; now 17 Nd5 would lose material, but after 17 g4 or 17 h5 White has been gifted a tempo) 17 Bh6 (instead 17 h5! looks more dangerous) and now:



a1) 17...Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Rb4 19 h5 Rc8 (19...Rfb8 looks more natural) 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 a3 (not 21 Nd5? Qxa2+! 22 Kxa2 Ra4 mate – a typical idea) 21...Rc5 22 Nd5? (Black does not really have any threats, so White has several tempting continuations, such as 22 f4!? when 22...Ra5 23 f5 Rxa3+ fails after 24 bxa3 Qxa3+ 25 Na2 Ra4 26 Rb8+ Be8 27 Rxe8+) 22...Rxd5 23 exd5 c3! and by now Black's attack was the stronger in D.Blazeka-L.Havas, Velika Gorica 2010.

a2) 17...e5 18 Nde2 Be6 19 h5 Rb6 20 g4 Qb7 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Ng3 Rb8 was S.Ter Sahakyan-D.Dvirnyy, Chotowa 2010. Here 23 Nf5+! would be very strong: 23...Bxf5 (or 23...gxf5 24 Qg5+ Kf8 25 gxf5 with a big advantage) 24 exf5 Rxb2 25 h6+! Kg8 26 Qxd6 and Black is busted. Even 27 Qxb8+! is a threat.

b) 15...Qa5!? (**Diagram 4**) is very interesting, if only because it is possible.

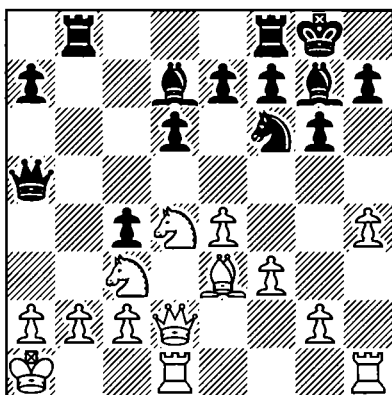


Diagram 4 (W)

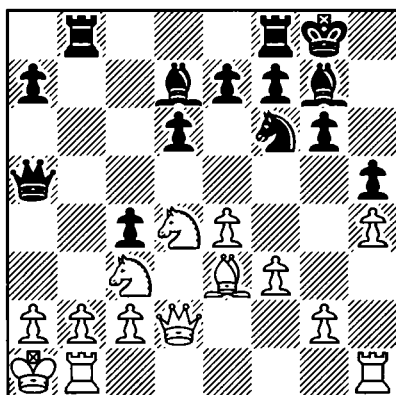


Diagram 5 (W)



**NOTE:** Playing ...Qa5 when White has moved his king from c1 is almost always a mistake when Black's king's rook is still on f8 because White can play Nd5. However, *almost always* does not mean *always*, so it can be worth checking if ...Qa5 is the move Black would like to play!

Here 16 Nd5 is unclear (instead 16 h5 and 16 g4!? are also possible) after 16...Qxd2 (Black could also play the sacrificial 16...Nxd5!? 17 Qxa5 Nxe3 18 Qc3 Nxd1 19 Rxd1 Rfc8) 17 Nxe7+ Kh8 18 Rxd2 Rfe8. Now 19 Nd5?? loses a piece after Nxd5 20 exd5 Rxe3, so White must find another way:

b1) 19 Nec6 Nxe4! 20 Nxb8 (20 fxe4? Bxc6) 20...Nxd2 21 Bxd2 Rxb8 was slightly

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better for Black in R.Bajda-I.Ravnik, correspondence 2006, because of the bishop pair.

b2) 19 Bf4 gives Black a choice between 19...Rb6 20 Nd5 Nxd5 21 exd5 Bf5! with approximate equality and 19...Rxe7 20 Bxd6 Ree8 21 Bxb8 Rxb8 which is unclear.

### **16 Rb1**

Carlsen continues his prophylactic play. There is a sharp alternative in 16 g4!? hxg4 (Black can also 'decline' with the untried 16...Qa5!? or 16...Qb6 17 Rb1 Qa5 18 gxh5 Nxh5 19 Rhg1 Rfc8 20 Rg5 Rc5 with chances for both sides in D.Sharma-D.Kanovsky, Olomouc 2010) 17 h5 Nxh5 18 fxg4 Bxg4 19 Rdg1 Qd7 and here:

a) 20 Bh6?! Be5! (White's attack was stronger after 20...Qb7?! 21 b3 in L.Henry-M.Nicholson, Toronto 2011) 21 Bxf8 Kxf8 and Black has excellent compensation for the exchange.

b) 20 Qg2?! Qb7 21 b3 cxb3 22 axb3 was M.Venkatesh-R.Fontaine, Paleohora 2009. Here 22...Rfc8! would be crushing, as Black's attack is much faster.

c) 20 Rh4! was originally suggested by Jones. Now 20...f5 (now if 20...Qb7 21 b3 cxb3 22 axb3 the c3-knight is defended so Black's counterplay is not as fast) 21 exf5 Bxf5 22 Bh6 e5 (Jones gave the stronger 22...Rf7 23 Bxg7 Rxg7 when White certainly retains good compensation for the pawns) 23 Nxf5 Qxf5 was M.Kanarek-E.Can, Chotowa 2010, when the simple 24 Bxg7 Kxg7 (24...Nxg7? 25 Rh6) 25 Qxd6 with the idea of Rxc4 gives White a big edge. Black's pawns are a mess and his king is exposed.

### **16...Qa5 (Diagram 5) 17 Bh6**

The alternatives are not impressive:

a) 17 Nd5?! Qxd2 18 Nxe7+ Kh7 19 Bxd2 Rfe8! (even stronger than 19...Nxe4 20 fxe4 Bxd4 with equality) 20 Nec6 Rb6 21 Na5 (21 Nxa7 Ra8 traps the knight) 21...Nxe4 22 fxe4 Bxd4 and here Black is much better as the white knight has been marooned on a5.

b) 17 Nde2 Rfc8 18 Rhd1 Rb4 19 a3 Rcb8 was level in K.Kulaots-G.Papp, Budapest 2008, as it is difficult for either side to make progress.

### **17...Bxh6!**

This is a very typical response. The white queen cannot mate Black by herself.

### **18 Qxh6 (Diagram 6) 18...Rb6**

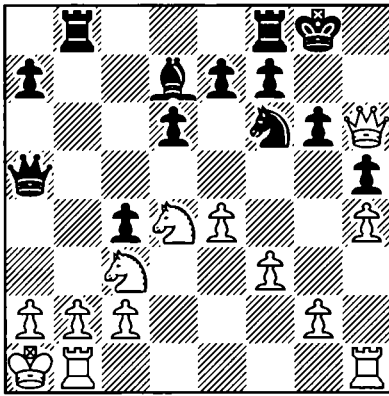


**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Black has a good alternative in 18...Rfc8!? which also sets a sinister trap.

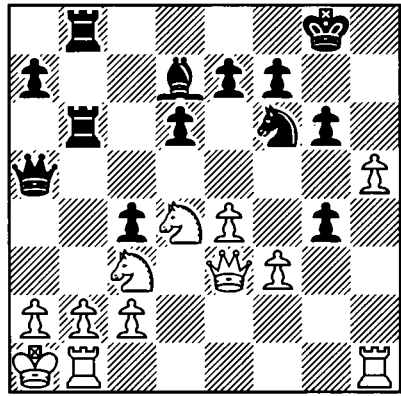
Indeed, after 19 g4? (better is 19 a3 Rc5 with level play) 19...Rxb2! 20 Kxb2 (if 20 Rxb2 Qxc3) 20...Qb4+ 21 Kc1 (the point is that 21 Nb3 cxb3 wins for Black because the c3-knight is hanging; this combination would not work earlier: 18...Rxb2?! 19 Kxb2 Qb4+ 20 Nb3!) 21...Qxc3 Black quickly won in R.Ramnath Bhuvanesh-N.Navalgund, Chennai 2010.

### **19 g4?!**

This should prove to be too ambitious. 19 Qd2 would be more prudent. After 19...Rfb8 (19...e5 is another idea) 20 Rhe1 Ra6 21 a3 e5 22 Nde2 the game would reach a bit of a standstill. Instead after 21 Re3?! (White wants to defend laterally, but this is not a good place for rook) 21...e5 22 Nde2 Be6 23 Nc1 Nd7! (the knight can leave the kingside because White's pieces are not coordinated at all) 24 Qe1 Nc5 Black's attacking chances were by far the more serious in M.Mrdja-I.Armanda, Zagreb 2010.



**Diagram 6 (B)**



**Diagram 7 (B)**

### **19...hxc4**

This is good, but it was also possible to play 19...Rfb8!? 20 gxh5 Rxb2!? (20...Nxb5 and 20...Qxb5 are fine) 21 Rxb2 Qxc3 22 Qc1 Nxb5 (not 22...Qxd4? 23 c3) 23 Kb1 Rc8 with an unclear position.

### **20 Qe3**

Instead 20 h5 is well met by 20...g5!: for example, 21 Nf5 Bxf5 22 Qxg5+ Kh7 23 exf5 Rg8 and Black has the initiative.

### **20...Rfb8 21 h5 (Diagram 7) 21...g5?!**

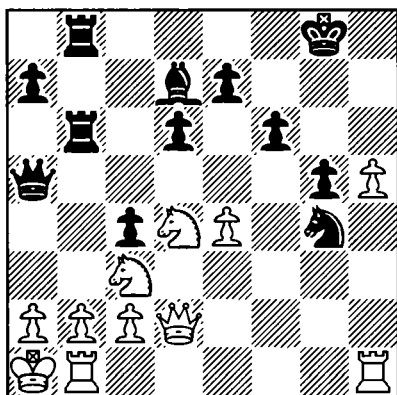
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

This looks quite good, but now Carlsen finds a clever way to drum up some chances. Better was the greedy 21...Nxb5! 22 fxg4 Bxg4 and now:

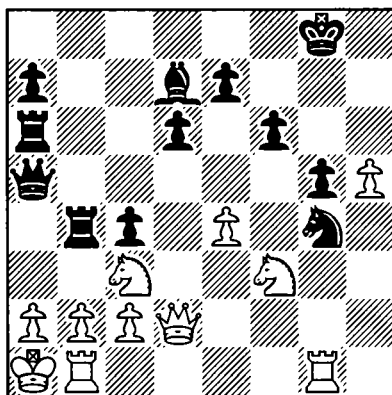
a) 23 Rh4 Bd7 24 Nd5 Ra6 25 a3 c3! (this thematic blow was pointed out by Ward) 26 Nxc3 Qxa3+ 27 bxa3 Rxa3+ 28 Na2 Rxb1+ 29 Kxb1 Rxe3 wins for Black.

b) 23 Nd5 Ra6 24 a3 c3! 25 Qxc3 (25 Nxc3 Qxa3+! is the same story as above) 25...Qxc3 26 Nxc3 and Black is a good pawn up in the ending. A good start towards exploiting it is with 26...e5! when Black's kingside pawns will soon advance.

**22 fxg4 Nxg4 23 Qd2 f6 (Diagram 8)**



**Diagram 8 (W)**



**Diagram 9 (W)**

**24 Nf3!**

This is a fantastic practical move. White combines the possibility of sacrificing on g5 with the disruptive advance e4-e5.

**24...Ra6**

Black should still be okay here, at least, but Radjabov begins to drift. He must avoid 24...Ne5 25 Nxg5, but he could consider a prophylactic move such as 24...Kh8 or 24...Kh7, while Golubev suggests 24...Nh6 with the idea 25 e5 Bc6.

**25 Rhg1**

Already 25 e5!? is possible. Golubev gives the line 25...Bc6 26 exf6! Bxf3 27 Rhf1 Nxf6 28 Rxf3 Ne4 29 Qe3 Nxc3 30 Qe6+ Kh8 31 Qh6+ with a draw. Carlsen keeps the tension, hoping for more, and he gets it.

**25...Rb4 (Diagram 9)**



**WARNING:** This threatens the typical Chinese shot 26...Qxa2+!  
27 Nxa2 Rxa2+ 28 Kxa2 Ra4 mate.

**26 a3**

The threat is averted and Black must be careful.

**26...Be6?!**

This is a clear mistake. Instead 26...Kh8 also allows 27 e5! Nxe5 28 Nxe5! (but not 28 Nxg5? Ra4! when Black wins) 28...Qxe5 29 Rge1 when White is better. The safest course was Ward's suggestion 26...Ra4!? (threatening ...Rxa3) 27 Nxa4 Qxd2 28 Nxd2 Rxa4 when Black does not even have one pawn for the exchange, but he still has good compensation because of his strong pawn chain.

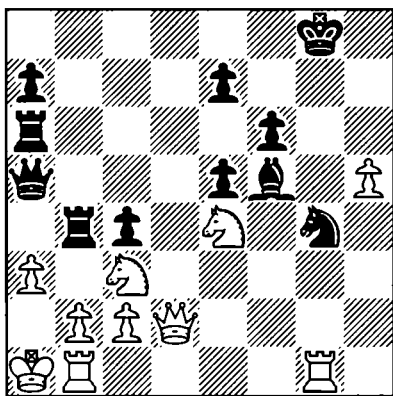
**27 e5! dxe5?!**

Also bad was 27...Nxe5?! 28 Nxg5, while the attractive 27...Qxa3+? 28 bxa3 Rxa3+ 29 Na2 c3 fails to 30 Qxg5+! fxg5 31 Rxb4 (Golubev). Perhaps the best chance was 27...Kh7, although after 28 exf6 exf6 29 Rg3!? White's chances have certainly improved.

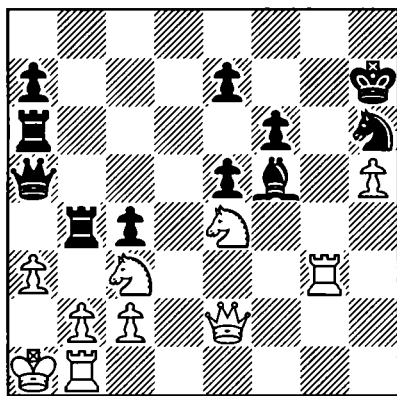
**28 Nxg5! Bf5**

Black loses quickly after 28...fxg5 29 Qxg5+ Kf8 30 h6.

**29 Nge4 (Diagram 10)**



**Diagram 10 (B)**



**Diagram 11 (B)**

Now White has more than enough for a pawn as his king is much the safer. This is the kind of position that makes me wary of the Chinese Dragon. All of Black's

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heavy pieces are on the edge of the board looking for some tricks on the a- and b-files. If White is careful and avoids an accident, he can find chances across the rest of the board.

### **29...Kh7 30 Qe2 Nh6 31 Rg3 (Diagram 11) 31...Be6?**

Black would have had much better chances to resist with the retreat 31...Rb8! and then:

a) 32 Qxc4?! Be6 33 Qc5 (of course not 33 Qe2?? Qxa3+ 34 bxa3 Rxa3+ 35 Na2 Rxa2 mate) 33...Nf5! 34 Rg6 Qxc5 35 Nxc5 Nd4! (threatening mate) 36 Rc1 Rc6 37 Nxe6 Nxe6 and Black is better.

b) 32 Qg2 Kh8 33 Qd2 (33 Rg6? Bxg6 34 Qxg6 fails to 34...f5!) 33...Nf7 and although I prefer White, the position remains rather unclear.

### **32 Rg6?!**

This should win, but 32 Qg2 (with the idea 33 Rg7+ Kh8 34 Qg6) is a knockout. After 32...Nf5 (32...Bf7 33 Rg7+ Kh8 34 Rg1 mates) 33 Rg7+! Nxd7 34 Qg6+ Kh8 35 Qh6+! Kg8 36 Rg1 wins quickly: for example, 36...Kf7 37 Rxd7+ Ke8 38 Nxf6+!.

### **32...Nf5**

Black had one last chance with 32...Bf5 33 Qg2 Bxe4 34 Qxe4 Qxa3+! 35 bxa3 Rxa3+ 36 Na2 Rxa2+ 37 Kxa2 Ra4+! 38 Kb2 c3+! 39 Kxc3 Rxe4 as pointed out by several commentators. White should still win in the long run, but at least Black is not mated and there is still some fight left.

### **33 Qg4**

Now it is all over.

**33...Nh4 34 Ng5+! fxg5 35 Qxg5 Nxd7 36 Qxg6+ Kh8 37 Rg1 1-0**

## **Game 21** **K.Szabo-M.Perunovic** **Sarajevo 2011**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8 11 Bb3 Na5 12 h4 (Diagram 12)**

This is a very natural advance of course, but White has not scored very well with this move. Still, I think it is a dangerous continuation.

### **12...b5 13 h5**

Instead 13 Kb1 transposes to the previous game, while 13 Bh6 Bxh6 14 Qxh6 is covered in the next game.

### 13...Nc4 14 Bxc4

This capture is played virtually automatically, but Pavlovic's recommendation 14 Qf2!? also deserves attention. After 14...Nxe3 15 Qxe3 (**Diagram 13**) White has given up the valuable dark-squared bishop, but he still has some dangerous attacking ideas:

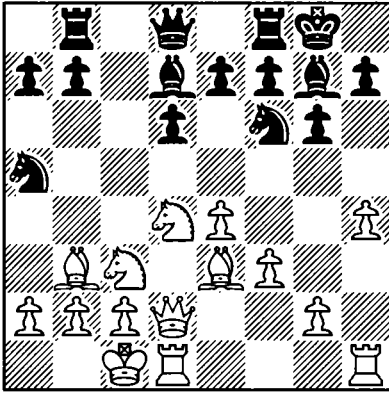


Diagram 12 (B)

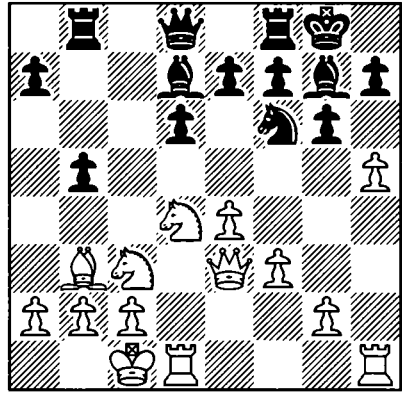


Diagram 13 (B)

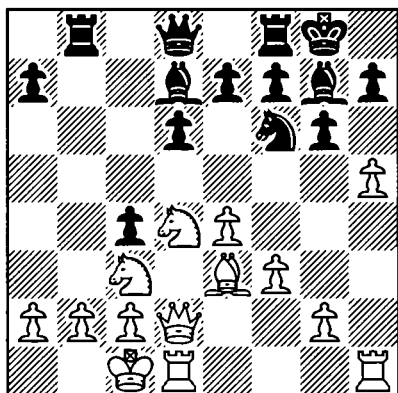
a) 15...Nxb5 16 g4 Nf6 17 Nf5! gxf5 18 gxf5 Kh8 19 Rdg1 Qb6 20 Qf4 Rg8 (after 20...Qd4, 21 Rxg7 Kxg7 22 Nd5 is worth at least a draw, while Pavlovic also gives 21 Qh4!? Bc6 22 Kb1 b4 23 Ne2 with the idea of Nf4 with a strong attack; here Black could instead try 22...Qd2!?) 21 Rd1 and now one line that Pavlovic gives is 21...Bc6 22 Bxf7 Rgf8 23 Be6 b4 24 Ne2 Bb5 25 Nd4 Be8 26 Qg5 Nh5! 27 Nb3 Bf6 28 Qh6 Bg7 with a repetition.

b) 15...a5 16 h6! (Pavlovic improves on the line 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 e5 dxe5 18 Nc6 Bxc6 19 Rxd8 Rfxd8 20 Qc5 when 20...Be8 looks fine for Black) 16...Bh8 17 e5 dxe5 18 Nc6 Bxc6 19 Rxd8 Rfxd8 20 Qc5 Be8 21 Rd1! and the presence of the h6-pawn gives Black some concern.

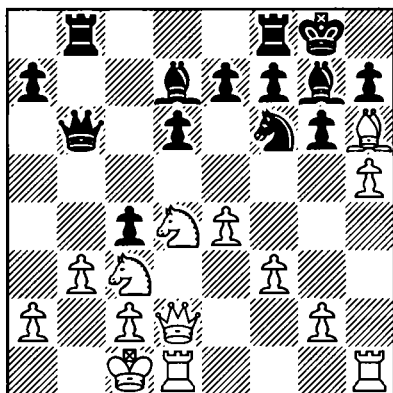
c) 15...b4!? 16 Nce2 (instead 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 Nd5 e6! looks fine for Black after 18 Nxf6+ Qxf6 or 18 Nf4 Re8) 16...e5 17 Nf5 gxf5 18 h6 f4 19 Qg1 Bh8 20 g3 Re8 21 gxf4+ Kf8 22 Rxd6 with a messy position in C.Dorrington-I.Snape, British League 2008.

### 14...bxc4 (Diagram 14) 15 Bh6!

Instead 15 hxg6 fxc6 gives Black the possibility of defending with ...Rf7. Some examples:



**Diagram 14 (W)**



**Diagram 15 (B)**

a) 16 Bh6 Qb6 (or 16...Bxh6 17 Qxh6 Qb6) 17 b3 cxb3 18 cxb3 Bxh6 19 Qxh6 Rbc8 20 Kb2 Rf7! 21 g4 e5 22 Nde2 Be6 gave Black good chances in M.Pg-F.Grafl, Budapest 2003.

b) 16 Nde2 Qa5 17 Kb1 Qb4 18 b3 a5! gives Black the initiative. Attempting to simplify with 19 Nd5?! brought no relief after 19...Qxd2 20 Rxd2 Nxd5 21 Rxd5 a4 and White's position was falling apart in C.Jaureguiberry-V.Jianu, French League 2005.

c) 16 Kb1 Qa5 17 Ka1 Rf7 18 Nde2 Ne8!? is an interesting manoeuvre. Black intends ...Nc7-b5, which is a thematic plan in Jones's favourite Benko gambit. After 19 Bd4 Qb4 20 Rb1 e5 21 Bxa7 Ra8 22 Be3 Be6 Black had reasonable compensation for the pawn in H.Mas-G.Jones, New Delhi 2007.

**15...Qb6 16 b3 (Diagram 15)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT: White has been forced into weakening his king position, but it is not so easy for Black to increase the pressure and White has scored well from here.**

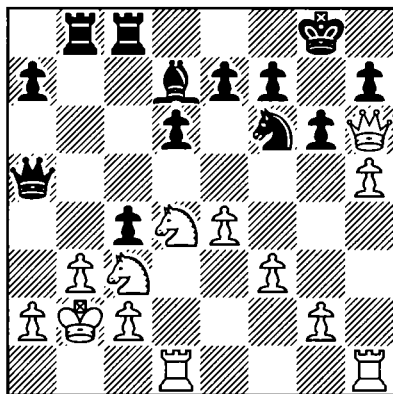
**16...Bxh6**

Szabo has also faced 16...cxb3 17 axb3 (after 17 cxb3?! Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Rfc8 Black should create enough counterplay) 17...Bh8?! (this does not work, but White is also doing well after 17...Bxh6 18 Qxh6 Qa5 19 Kb2 Rfc8 20 Rd3!) 18 Bxf8 Rxf8 19 g4 Rc8 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 g5 Nh5 22 Nd5 when White has a material advantage and the initiative. Then 22...Qd8 23 Rxh5! gxh5 24 Nf5 Bxf5 25 exf5 Rb8 26 Qe3 Kf8 27 g6

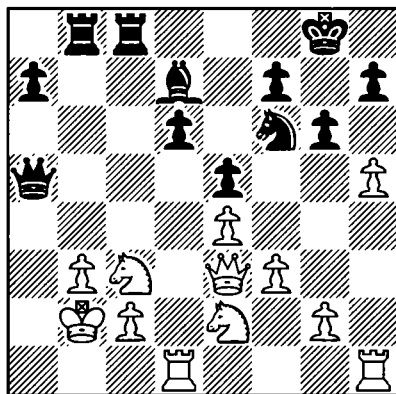


Rb7 28 Qe6 1-0 was K.Szabo-I.Porat, Budapest 2008.

**17 Qxh6 Qa5 18 Kb2 Rfc8 (Diagram 16)**



**Diagram 16 (W)**



**Diagram 17 (B)**

Black's pieces are all placed well and he even seems to enjoy some initiative. However, if White can consolidate his position, his better pawn structure will give him good chances.

**19 Qe3**

Another success for White went 19 Nde2 cxb3 20 axb3 Qc7 21 Rd2 Be6 22 g4 when it is not clear how Black should continue. After 22...Bc4 23 hxg6 fxg6 24 g5 Nh5 25 Rxh5 gxh5 26 g6 hxg6 27 Qxg6+ Kf8 28 Nd5 Bxd5 29 exd5 e5 30 Rd1! the rook shifted to the kingside and White's attack proved to be too strong in J.Echavarria-L.Da Costa Junior, correspondence 2003.

**19...cxb3 20 axb3 e5**

Instead 20...Nxb3? 21 Nd5 Qd8 22 Rxh5 (22 Nf5 looks good too) 22...gxh5 23 Qg5+ gives White a strong attack.

**21 Nde2 (Diagram 17) 21...Qc5?**

Better was 21...Nxb3, although after 22 Rxh5!? (White has good alternatives in 22 Ra1 and 22 g4) 22...gxh5 23 Qg5+ with the idea of Rxd6 White has excellent compensation.

**22 Qg5!**

This is even stronger than 22 Qxc5 dxc5 23 Nd5 with a clear edge in the endgame.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

### 22...Bb5?

Black tries to defend tactically. This fails, but Black also loses quickly after both 22...Kg7 23 h6+ and 22...Ne8 23 hxc6 fxc6 24 Qe7. The best try was the odd-looking 22...Nxb5 23 Rxb5 f6 24 Qg3 (24 Qxf6 gxf6 25 Rxd6 is also strong) 24...Bb5 25 Rd5! (25 Rd2? Bxe2 26 Nxe2 Qe3) 25...Qc7 26 Rd2 Bxe2 27 Nxe2 a5 when Black is down a piece, but can fight on for a bit because White's pieces are not so well coordinated anymore.

### 23 hxc6 fxc6 24 Qxf6 Bxe2 25 Qe6+ Kh8

This allows a king hunt, but Black also loses quickly after 25...Kf8 26 Qxd6+ Qxd6 27 Rxd6 when he is already a pawn down and both the e2-bishop and h7-pawn are under attack.

### 26 Rxh7+! Kxh7 27 Qf7+ Kh6 28 Rh1+ Kg5 29 f4+ Kg4 30 Qxg6+ 1-0

Black is mated by 30...Kxf4 31 Nxe2+ Ke3 32 Qg3+ Kxe2 33 Qe1 mate.

## Game 22

**K.Abhishek-P.Konguvel**

Delhi 2010

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8 11 Bb3 Na5 12 Bh6 (Diagram 18)

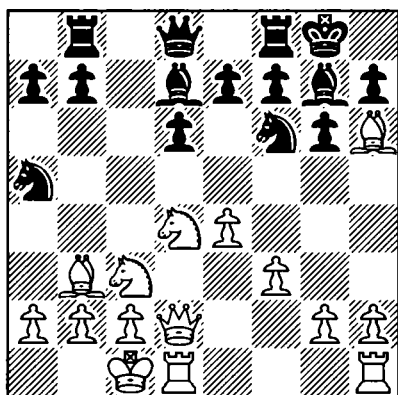


Diagram 18 (B)

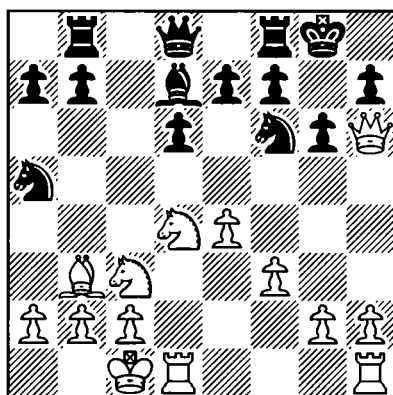


Diagram 19 (B)

This is the main line. White removes the Dragon bishop and waits to decide if he

will play for a direct attack or steer the game into positional channels. The 'novice' IM Edward Dearing gave this as the main line back in 2004 and was subsequently mocked for this in *New in Chess Yearbook 75* because of Black's thematic reply. Seven years later, 12 Bh6 has been played by Carlsen, Bacrot, and Dominguez Perez, amongst other strong grandmasters. So, if Dearing was wrong, he is at least in good company.

### 12...Bxb6

This standard response is by far the most popular move. The queen cannot mate by herself, so Black hopes to show that she is offside. Black can also play 12...Nxb3+, but there is no need to hurry with this capture. The main alternative is 12...b5 13 Bxg7 Kxg7, but then Black's king is a little more exposed and White is happy to keep his queen in the centre, having removed Black's best piece. Some examples:

a) 14 Rhe1 is not very purposeful: 14...b4 (14...e5! looks more accurate) 15 Nd5 e5 16 Ne2 (White could maintain equality with 16 Nf5+! Bxf5 17 exf5 Nxb3+ 18 axb3 Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Qg5+ 20 Kb1 Qxf5 21 Qxd6) 16...Nxb3+ 17 cxb3 Nxd5 18 Qxd5 Rb6 19 Kb1 Bc6 (19...Qh4!?) 20 Qd2 a5 with a good position for Black in A.Kovacevic-I.Markovic, Budva 2003.

b) 14 g4 b4 (14...Nc4!?) 15 Nd5 Nxb3+ (instead 15...e5 led to White's advantage after 16 Nf5+! Bxf5 17 gxf5 Nxb3+ 18 axb3 Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Rb6 20 h4 in A.Lopez del Alamo-J.Cuenca Jimenez, Mondariz 2004) 16 Nxb3 Nxd5 17 exd5 Rb6 18 h4 h6 19 Qd4+ Kh7 20 Qd3 Kg7 21 h5 g5 22 Rhe1 and White was much better in E.Bacrot-J.Degraeve, German League 2010, because of his space advantage and the possibility of opening the kingside with f3-f4.

c) 14 Nd5 is simple enough: 14...Nc4 (White is also a little better after 14...Nxd5 15 exd5 or 14...Nxb3+ 15 Nxb3 Nxd5 16 exd5) 15 Bxc4 bxc4 16 Nxf6 exf6 17 Qc3 with a small advantage in E. Rodriguez Guerrero-P.Charbonneau, La Roche-sur-Yon 2006.

### 13 Qxh6 (Diagram 19) 13...b5

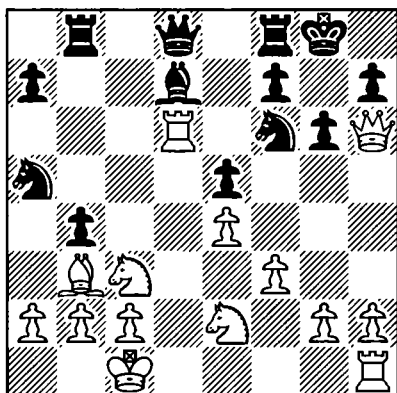


**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This is by far the most common move, but Black has an interesting alternative in 13...e5!? which has scored well. This looks like a good move order for Black, although it involves a pawn sacrifice.

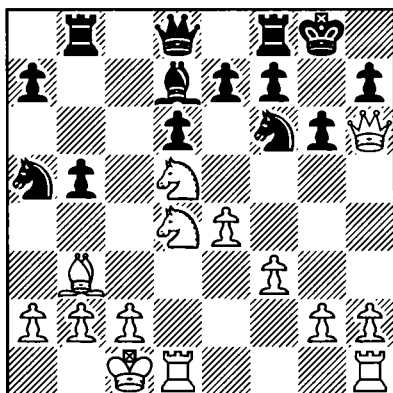
Following 14 Nde2 (14 Ndb5 gives Black a choice after 14...Nxb3 15 axb3 with 15...Bxb5 16 Nxb5 Qa5 or 15...d5!? 16 exd5 Bxb5 17 Nxb5 Qa5) 14...b5! 15 Rxd6 (in-

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

stead 15 h4 transposes to the main game, but Black has avoided both 14 Nd5 in the note to White's next move and the 14 g4 of Game 23) 15...b4 (**Diagram 20**) Black has active play for the pawn:



**Diagram 20 (W)**



**Diagram 21 (B)**

a) 16 Nb1?! Nxb3+ (also good is Motylev's suggestion 16...Qe7 17 Rhd1 Bb5 18 Ng3 Nxb3+ 19 axb3 Ne8 20 R6d2 Ng7 with the idea of ...Ne6-d4) 17 axb3 Ne8 18 Rd3 Qc7 19 Rhd1 Bb5 20 c4 bxc3 21 Rxc3 Qb7 and Black had more than enough for the pawn in A.Zhigalko-A.Motylev, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.

b) 16 Nd1 Nxb3+ 17 axb3 Qe7 18 Qd2 (18 Rd2 could be met by 18...a5 or 18...Rfc8) 18...Rb6!? 19 Rxb6 axb6 20 Qe3 Qd6 21 Qd3 Qc5 22 Ne3 Bb5 23 Nc4 Ra8 24 Rd1 Qf2 and Black had good counterplay in L.Lorenzo de la Riva-H.Delgado Ramos, Sitges 2011.

c) 16 Na4 Nb7! 17 Rd2 Qe8 (17...Qa5 18 Ng3 amounts to the same thing) 18 Ng3 Bxa4 19 Nf5 gxf5 20 Qg5+ Kh8 21 Qxf6+ Kg8 22 Qg5+ with a draw – Motylev.

d) 16 Nd5 is the most natural. Motylev gives 16...Nxb3+ 17 axb3 Nxd5 18 Rxd5 Qc7 with compensation for the pawn.

### 14 h4

Black is well prepared for this direct move. Instead 14 g4 is covered in the next game, while White can also play positionally with 14 Nd5 (**Diagram 21**).

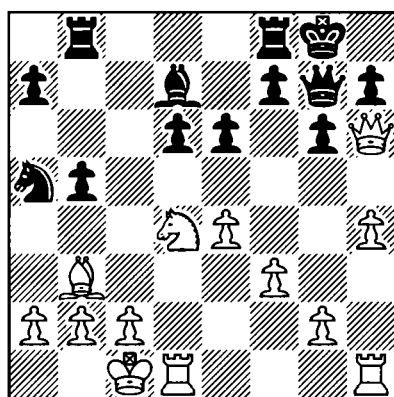
Black has:

a) 14...Nxb3+ 15 Nxb3 (after 15 axb3 Nxd5 16 exd5 Black can play either 16...Qa5 or 16...e5 with reasonable play) 15...e5 16 h4 (16 Nxf6+ Qxf6 is fine for Black)

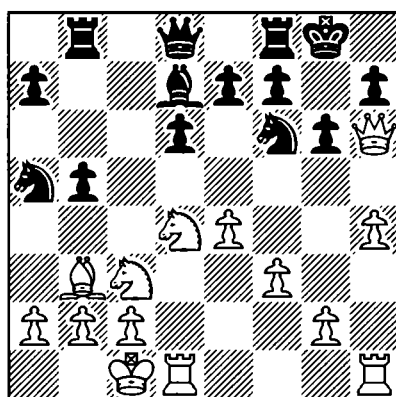
16...Nxd5 17 Rxd5 Rb6 18 f4 (if 18 h5 Qe7) 18...Be6 19 h5 Qe7 20 Rd3 exf4 21 Qxf4 g5 22 Qe3 h6 23 Nd4 Rc8 with unclear play in R.Robson-G.Papp, Lubbock 2009.

b) 14...e5 15 Nf5! (15 Nxf6+ Qxf6 16 Ne2 Nxb3+ 17 cxb3 b4 is fine for Black)  
15...Nxb3+ (15...Bxf5 16 exf5 Nxb3+ 17 axb3 is the same) 16 axb3 Bxf5 17 exf5 Nxd5 18 Rxd5 Rb6 19 Rhd1 gives White a persistent edge, as shown by several games.

c) 14...e6 looks best, since 15 Nxf6+ Qxf6 16 h4 Qg7 (**Diagram 22**) is very solid.



**Diagram 22 (W)**



**Diagram 23 (B)**

Some examples:

c1) 17 Qxg7+ Kxg7 18 Ne2 Rb6 19 e5 d5 20 f4 h5 21 Rh3 b4 22 Nd4 Rc8 was pretty level in F.Fleischander-H.Daurelle, correspondence 2006.

c2) 17 Qd2 Nc4 18 Bxc4 bxc4 19 Kb1 Rb6 20 Ka1 Rfb8 21 Rb1 Qe5 is fine for Black and after 22 Qc3 Qc5 23 f4 Ra6 24 Rbd1 Rab6 25 Rb1 Ra6 26 Rbd1 Rab6 27 Rb1 Ra6 White acquiesced to a draw against his lower-rated opponent in A.Timofeev-I.Porat, Ohrid 2009.

c3) 17 Qg5 Qe5 18 Ne2 Bc6 19 Rd2 Rfd8 (the immediate 19...Nb7 looks better) 20 Rhd1 Nb7 21 Nf4 (now White could try 21 Qxe5 dxe5 22 Rxd8+ Rxd8 23 Rxd8+ Nxd8 24 Kd2 when he has a healthier pawn majority) 21...a5 22 a3 Re8 23 Nd3 Qxg5 24 hxg5 Kg7 25 e5 Red8 26 exd6 Rxd6 27 Ne5 Rxd2 28 Rxd2 Be8 29 Ba2 h6 was equal in S.Kudrin-A.Shabalov, U.S. League (internet) 2009.

Returning to 14 h4 (**Diagram 23**):

**14...e5!**

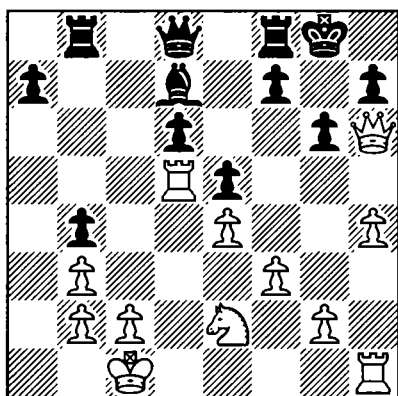
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

This typical advance is well timed. Black gains space and creates the possibility of defending his king along the second rank. The d6-pawn will be backward, but it is easily defended and White cannot make much use of the d5-square either.

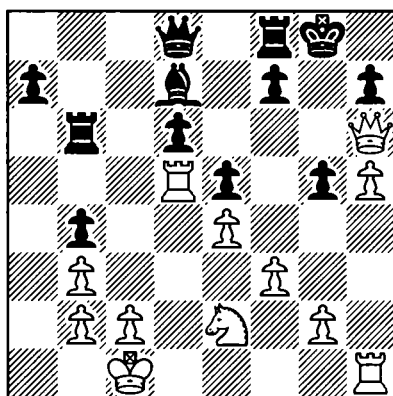
**15 Nde2 b4 16 Nd5 Nxb3+ 17 axb3**

No better is 17 cxb3 Nxd5 18 Rxd5 Be6 19 Rd2 Rb6 20 Kb1 when Black can play the solid 20...Qe7 or the ambitious 20...Ra6 with ideas like ...Qa5 and even ...d5.

**17...Nxd5 18 Rxd5 (Diagram 24)**



**Diagram 24 (B)**



**Diagram 25 (W)**

**18...Rb6**

This move combines the defence of the d-pawn with the possibility of attacking with ...Ra6 or ...Rc6. The alternative is 18...Be6 19 h5! and then:

a) 19...g5? fails to 20 Nd4! when the e6-bishop is attacked and Nc6 is threatened. Black cannot cover everything and both White pieces are immune: 20...exd4 21 Rxd4 or 20...Bxd5 21 Nf5.

b) 19...Qc7 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 Rxd6 Rfc8! looks fine: 22 Rc6 (22 Kb1!? should be met with 22...Rb6!) 22...Qxc6 23 Qxh7+ Kf8 24 Qh6+ is a draw.

c) 19...Rb7 allows Black to keep the game going: for example, 20 Rb5!? Qe7 21 Rxb7 Qxb7 with equal chances in B.Michiels-V.Mikhailevski, Longeville-les-Metz 2011.

**19 h5**

After this the white queen will be entombed, but a move like 19 Kb1 could be met comfortably with 19...Qc7, 19...Be6, or even 19...f6!?

### 19...g5! (Diagram 25)

There was nothing wrong with 19...Qe7, but this is more enterprising.

### 20 f4

White tries to force matters tactically. Grabbing the pawn with 20 Rxd6 (or 20 Rhd1 f6 21 Rxd6) gives Black more than enough after 20...f6 21 Rhd1 Rxd6 22 Rxd6 Qe7 as the white queen is locked out of the game.

### 20...Bg4 (Diagram 26)

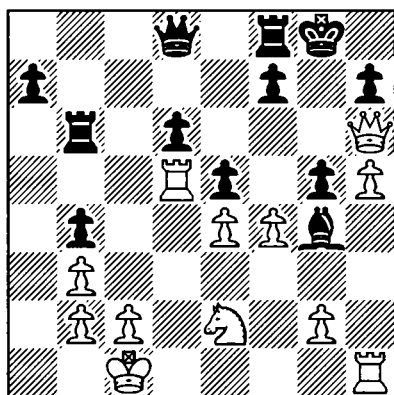


Diagram 26 (W)

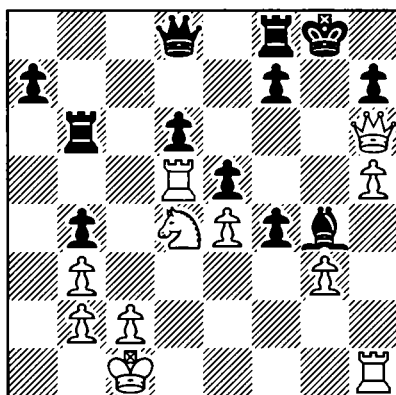


Diagram 27 (B)

This is more challenging than 20...gxf4 21 Nxf4 f6 22 Ng6! Rf7! 23 Nh4 with an unclear position.

### 21 Nd4

Now this move seems rather desperate, but it is probably White's best chance. The alternatives leave him struggling:

a) 21 fxf5? Bxe2 22 g6 fxf6 23 hxf6 Qe7 led to nothing for White in E.Janev-H.Daurelle, Saint Affrique 2007.

b) 21 fxe5 dxe5! (21...Bxe2?! 22 exd6 is much less clear and White has scored well from here) 22 Rxd8 Rxh6 23 Rxf8+ (preferable is 23 Rd2, but Black is still better after 23...Rxh5 24 Rxh5 Bxh5 25 Ng3 Bg4) 23...Kxf8 24 Ng3 Rf6 with a big advantage to Black as pointed out by Ward.

### 21...gxf4 22 g3 (Diagram 27)

Instead 22 Nf5 Bxf5 23 exf5 Kh8 24 f6?! (White should at least try 24 Rhd1 f6 25 g3 fxg3 26 Rg1 Rg8 27 Rd3) 24...Rg8 gives Black a winning position because the queen

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

on h6 is again marooned. After 25 Rhd1 Qc7 26 R1d2 Rc6 27 Kb1 Qb6 28 Rd1 Qf2 Black won quickly in L.Ramos-A.Gonzalez Perez, Santa Clara 2009.

### 22...fxg3

After 22...Kh8 23 gxf4 exd4 White gets enough play for the piece with 24 Rg5 Rg8 25 Rxg8+ Kxg8 26 Rg1 Qh4 27 f5. A couple of examples:

a) 27...f6?! 28 Qf4 Kf7?! (better is 28...Qxh5 29 Rxg4+ Kh8 30 Qg3 Qh1+ 31 Kd2 Qh6+ 32 Kd1 Qf8, although this is still uncomfortable) 29 Qxg4 Qxg4 30 Rxg4 and with h5-h6 coming, White had a winning rook ending in Al.Ivanov-A.Dmitrienko, Sochi 2007.

b) 27...Rc6 wisely heads for a draw: 28 f6 Rxc2+ 29 Kxc2 (if 29 Kb1 Rxb2+) 29...Qf2+ 30 Kd3 Qe2+ 31 Kxd4 Qxb2+ 32 Kc4 Qc3+ 33 Kb5 Qc5+ 34 Ka4 Qc6+ 35 Kxb4 a5+ 36 Kxa5 Qc5+ 37 Ka4 Qa7+ 38 Kb5 Qc5+ 1/2-1/2 was N.Burnoiu-V.Jianu, Bucharest 2006.

### 23 Nf5

Instead 23 Rg1 Qh4 leads to:

a) 24 Kb1?! f6 25 Ne6? Rf7 (25...Bxe6 26 Rd3 Qxe4 27 Rdxg3+ Kf7 wins as well) 26 Rd3 Qxh5 27 Qd2 (after 27 Qxh5 Bxh5 28 Rdxg3+ Bg6 the knight is stuck) 27...Bxe6 28 Rdxg3+ Kf8 29 Rg8+ Ke7 and Black was winning in O.Zambrana-Z.Zhao, Sao Paulo 2008.

b) 24 Nf5 Bxf5 25 exf5 (25 Rd3? Qf4+) 25...f6! intends to exchange the queens with ...Qg5+. After 26 Qe3 Kh8 27 Qxg3 (27 Rxg3? Ra6!) 27...Qxg3 28 Rxg3 Rg8 Black remains a pawn up, but White has good chances to hold.

### 23...Bxf5 (Diagram 28)

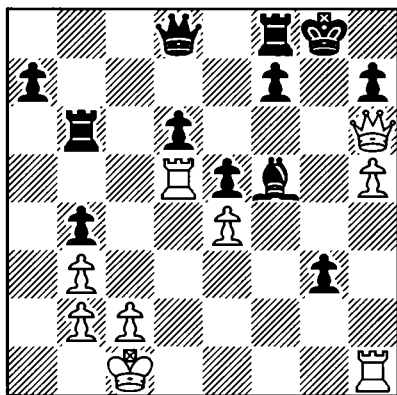


Diagram 28 (W)

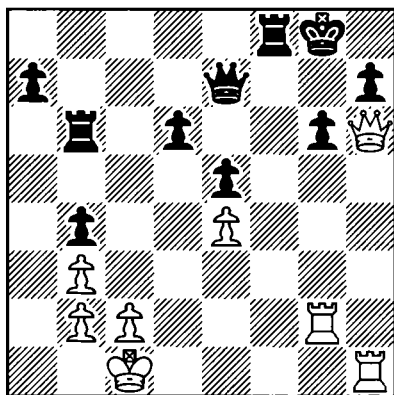


Diagram 29 (W)



**24 Rd3!**

At least this move draws. Instead 24 exf5? Kh8! 25 f6 Rg8 was winning for Black in D.Shaw-D.Tan, British League 2005. Black's king is safe and the g-pawn is very strong.

**24...g2 25 Rg3+ Bg6 26 Rxg2 Qe7 27 hxg6 fxc6 (Diagram 29) 28 Rxg6+ Kh8?!**

Black feels compelled to play for a win against his lower-rated opponent, but objectively he should just allow a draw with 28...hxg6 29 Qxc6+ Qg7 30 Qe6+ Rf7 31 Qc8+ Qf8 32 Qg4+.

**29 Rhg1 Qf7 30 Rg7**

White could also play 30 Rxd6 Qf4+ 31 Qxf4 exf4 32 Rxb6 axb6 33 Kd2 with some advantage.

**30...Qf4+ 31 Qxf4 exf4 32 Rxa7 d5?!**

Black is really pushing it. 32...Rb5 was better.

**33 exd5 Rg6 34 Rf1 f3 35 Kd2 Rg5 36 Rd7 f2 37 c4 Rg3 38 Re7 Rxb3 39 Kc2**

After this Black holds the draw. Instead 39 d6 Rxb2+ 40 Ke3 should win.

**39...Rg3 40 Re2 b3+ 41 Kd2 Rf4 42 Re3 Rg1 43 Ke2 Rxf1 44 Kxf1 Rxc4 45 Rd3 Kg7 46 d6 Rc8 47 Rxb3 Rd8 48 Rd3 Kf6 49 Kxf2 Ke6 ½-½**

*Game 23*

**V.Kotronias-V.Ivanchuk**  
**Gibraltar 2011**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8 11 Bb3 Na5 12 Bh6 Bxh6 13 Qxh6 b5**

As mentioned in the previous game, Black has the interesting possibility 13...e5 here. White could avoid this by using the move order 12 g4 b5 13 Bh6 Bxh6 (13...Nc4 is relatively unexplored) 14 Qxh6, transposing to the game. This seems more accurate to me, but many strong players still prefer the move order with 12 Bh6.

**14 g4 (Diagram 30)**

This certainly looks more dangerous than 14 h4 or 14 Nd5.

**14...b4**

Instead 14...Nxb3+ 15 Nxb3 b4 16 Nd5 transposes, while here 14...e5? is bad because 15 Nf5! would be very strong. This is one of the main points behind 14 g4.

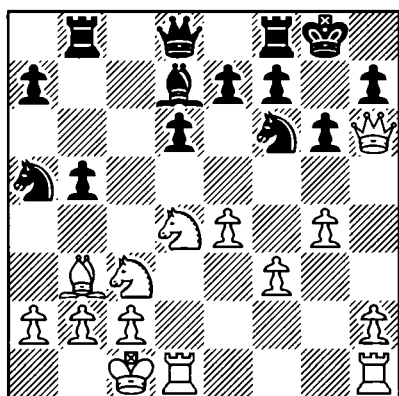
**15 Nd5 Nxb3+ 16 Nxb3 e5!?**



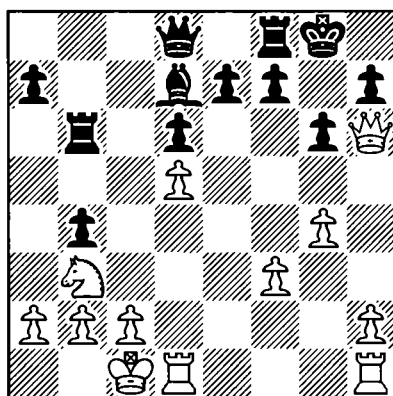
**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This is rather unusual, but anything that Ivan-chuk plays in the opening deserves serious attention.

Also important is 16...Nxd5 17 exd5 Rb6! (Black's pawn structure is worse after 17...e5 18 dxe6 Bxe6), defending the d6-pawn in anticipation of playing ...e5 (**Diagram 31**).

White has a few options:



**Diagram 30 (B)**



**Diagram 31 (W)**

a) 18 Rhe1 e5 19 dxe6 fxe6 gives Black good play, as White's g4-advance suddenly looks out of place. Black was quickly better after 20 Re3 Rf7 21 Nd2 d5 22 Nb3 Qc7 in L.Dominguez Perez-M.Carlsen, Linares 2009.

b) 18 Rhg1 lines up against the black king and creates the possibility of Rg3-h3. Black should still play 18...e5! 19 f4!? (19 Rg3 f5) 19...f5 20 gxf5 Bxf5 21 fxe5 dxe5 with a good position. A couple of examples:

b1) 22 Kb1 Rd6 23 Qd2 a5 24 Nc1 Qb6 gave Black a clear initiative in A.Feher-A.Gergacz, Szentgotthard 2010.

b2) 22 Qe3 Qc7 23 Rd2 Rc8 24 Rgg2 Rf6! 25 Kb1 a5 26 Nc1 a4 27 Rge2 was G.Papp-L.Cernousek, Rogaska Slatina 2009. Here Black should simply play 27...e4 with a good game.

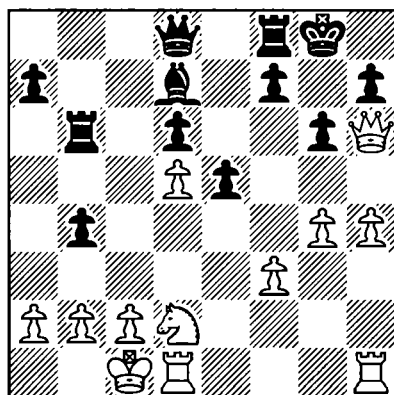
c) 18 h4! e5 and now:

c1) 19 dxe6 fxe6 with a further divide:

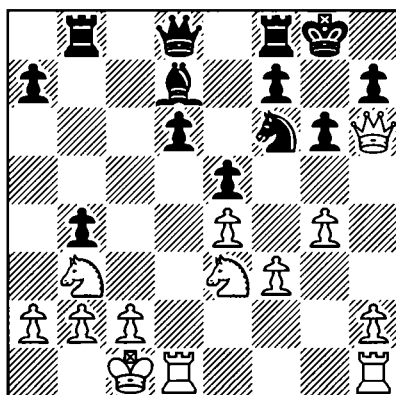
c11) 20 Rd3 Bb5 (20...Qe7 looks more accurate) 21 Re3 (21 Nd4!) 21...e5 22 h5 g5 23 Qe6+ Kh8 24 Nd2 Bd7 25 Qd5 Qe7 with chances for both sides in K.Maslak-M.Porat, Pardubice 2008. Both sides have active pieces and some pawn weaknesses.

c12) 20 Rhe1 Qf6?! (Black should try 20...Qe7 or 20...Rxf3) 21 Nc5! dxc5 22 Rxd7 Rf7 23 Rxf7 Qxf7 24 Rd1 Rb8 25 h5 was much better for White in I.Malakhov-S.Solovjov, St Petersburg 2011.

c2) 19 Nd2! (**Diagram 32**)



**Diagram 32 (B)**



**Diagram 33 (B)**

leaves the position rather closed. It has been seen in a couple of correspondence games and was recommended by Pavlovic. Some possibilities:

c21) 19...f5? 20 h5 g5 runs into 21 Nc4! Ra6 22 Nxe5!.

c22) 19...Qe7 20 Rdg1 (20 g5 f5?! 21 h5 gave White the advantage in R.Van Kampen-H.Hamdouchi, Calvi 2011, but 20...Bf5 looks okay for Black) 20...Kh8 21 Kb1 and White's play is easier.

c23) 19...Ra6 20 Ne4 f5 21 h5!? (Pavlovic gives 21 Ng5 Qe7 22 h5 Rf6 23 Kb1 Qg7 24 Qxg7+ Kxg7 25 h6+ Kg8 26 Rhf1 with a possible edge) 21...fxe4 22 hxg6 Qe7 23 fxe4 Rxa2 (not 23...Qg7? 24 Qxg7+ Kxg7 25 Rxh7+) 24 Kb1 Ra6 25 g5 with good compensation for the piece.

**17 Ne3! (Diagram 33)**

White retains the knight, which may later go to c4 or even f5. Instead 17 h4 allows Black to execute his normal plan with 17...Nxd5 18 Rxd5 Rb6 19 Rhd1 (19 h5 could

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

be met with 19...g5 20 Rxd6 f6 or even just 19...Qe7) and now instead of 19...Be6 20 Rxe5 Bxb3 21 axb3 dxe5 22 Rxd8 Rxd8 23 Qe3 with an unclear position in M.Petr-I.Porat, Brno 2006, Black could simply have played 19...Qc7!, intending ...Be6 or ...Rc8 with excellent play.

### 17...Be6

Instead Jones suggests 17...Bb5!?. This move also covers the c4-square and ...Be2 is a possibility, but Black will have to watch out for Ne3-f5.

### 18 h4 Kh8!?

This move threatens to trap the white queen. Instead 18...Qc7 19 h5 Rbc8 20 Rd2 looks a little bit better for White.

### 19 Qg5

Of course not 19 h5? Ng8.

### 19...Rb6 (Diagram 34)

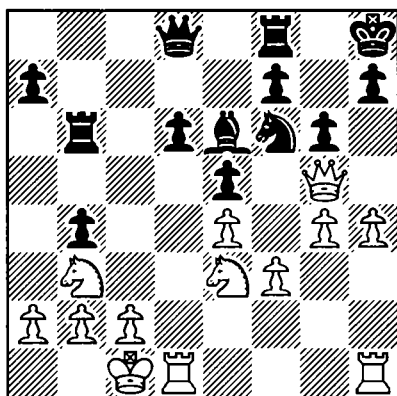


Diagram 34 (W)

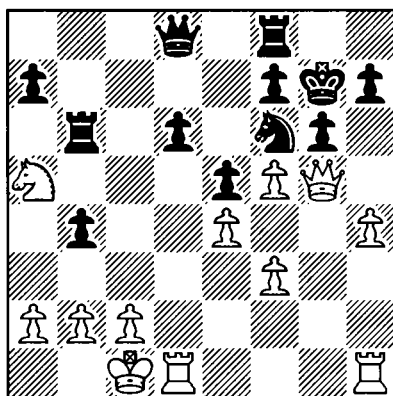


Diagram 35 (B)

### 20 Na5!?

White wants to put a knight on c4. This is not bad, but 20 Nc5! looks stronger:

a) 20...Bxa2 21 b3 (21 h5!? looks good too) 21...Rc6 22 Nb7! Qe7 23 Na5 and the bishop remains trapped.

b) 20...Qe7 21 Nxe6 fxe6 22 h5 gxh5 23 gxh5 Rg8 24 Qh4 was given by Van Delft and Ris. This looks very good for White.

c) 20...Rc6 21 Nb7 Qe7 22 Rxd6 Rxd6 23 Nxd6 Bxa2 24 Ndc4 (or 24 Rd1) 24...Bxc4 25

Nxc4 and again White has a sizable advantage.

**20...Kg7! 21 Nf5+ Bxf5 22 gxf5 (Diagram 35)**

White could also try 22 exf5, but it is more logical to open the g-file.

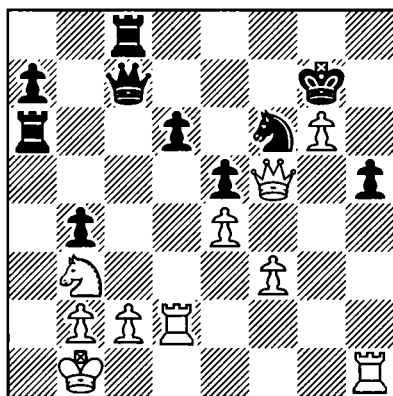
**22...Qc7?!**

This allows White to seize the initiative. Better was 22...h6! 23 Qg2 Ra6 24 Nc4 and now 24...Qc8! looks fine for Black: for example, 25 b3 (25 Nxd6? Qc7 26 Nb5 Qc5 27 Qe2 Ra5) 25...d5! 26 exd5 Qxf5 with chances for both sides.

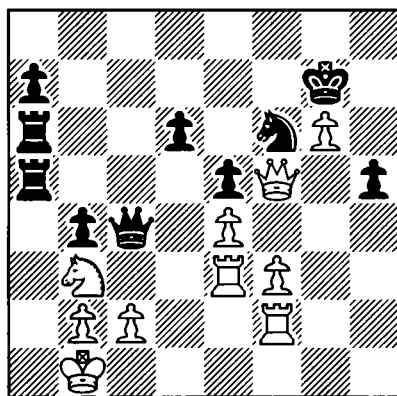
**23 fxg6 fxg6**

No better is 23...hxg6 24 h5 Rc8 25 Rd2 Nh7 26 Qg3 g5 27 Kb1 when White's king is safer and he has the better pawn structure.

**24 h5 Rc8 25 Rd2 Ra6 26 hxg6 h5 27 Nb3 Rxa2 28 Kb1 Ra6 29 Qf5 (Diagram 36)**



**Diagram 36 (B)**



**Diagram 37 (B)**

**29...Qc4?!**

This is too ambitious. Black could try to hold things together with 29...Qd7!?, while Jones suggests 29...Rc6 with the possible line 30 f4 Rxc2 31 fxe5 dxe5 32 Rf1 Qc6 33 Qxe5 Rxd2 34 Nxd2 Qc2+ 35 Ka2 Qa4+ with a draw.

**30 Re1 Rc5 31 Rf2**

Here 31 f4! looks very strong. If 31...Rca5? (better is 31...Rc7 32 fxe5 dxe5 33 Qxe5 Re6, but Black is struggling) 32 Nxa5 Rxa5 33 Rxd6 Qa2+ 34 Kc1 when Black's attack is over and he will soon be mated himself.

**31...Rca5 32 Re3?? (Diagram 37)**

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

A terrible blunder. Instead 32 Nxa5 Rxa5 gives Black real counterplay, but the cool 32 Rd1! Ra1+ 33 Nxa1 Qa2+ 34 Kc1 Qxa1+ 35 Kd2 Qxb2 36 Qc8! would give White good winning chances.

**32...Qd4!**

Now the tables are turned and White cannot save himself.

**33 Nxa5 Qd1+ 34 Ka2 Rxa5+ 35 Kb3 Qa1 36 c3 Qa4+ 37 Kc4 bxc3+ 0-1**

## **Conclusion**

The Chinese Variation has been very popular at all levels over the last decade, but I suspect its use will begin to decline. White has more than one good way to play for an advantage. Both 12 h4, delaying Bh6 and intending a quick h5, and 12 Bh6 (12 g4 is probably a more accurate move order) 12...Bxh6 13 Qxh6 b5 (13...e5!?) 14 g4 look good enough for an edge.

## Chapter Five

# Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 Bb3 (Diagram 1)

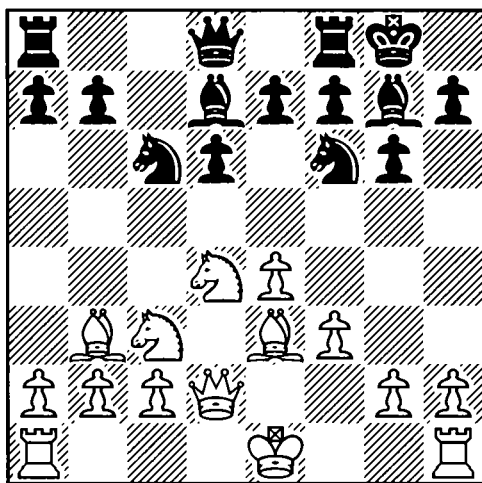


Diagram 1 (B)

This is an interesting move order that has been used by such players as Anand, Karjakin, Radjabov, Jakovenko, and Vachier-Lagrave. Its primary benefit is that it

avoids the Chinese Variation, but it is also of theoretical importance because it very often arises from an Accelerated Dragon move order: 1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 Nc6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 g6 5 Nc3 Bg7 6 Be3 Nf6 7 Bc4 O-O 8 Bb3 d6 9 f3 Bd7 10 Qd2.

In this chapter, we focus on the main line with 10...Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5, which seeks to take advantage of White's move order. This obviously resembles the Topalov Variation of Chapter 3. The difference is that White has not castled and Black has not played ...Rc8. This would seem to favour Black, as ...Rc8 is often not necessary and in fact Black may prefer to have his rook on a8 or b8 as he advances his queenside pawns. Matters are not so one-sided, however, as White may be able to benefit from not having castled.

In Game 24 White plays the immediate 12 a4, hoping to prove that Black's queen-side advance is premature. White may also try to save a tempo and begin attacking Black's castled position immediately with 12 h4. After 12...a5 White can 'change his mind' and play 13 a4, which leads to complicated play all over the board. This actually used to be the main line and is examined in Game 25. The more consistent continuation is 13 h5, which is very similar to the 13 h4 line of the Topalov Variation (Game 17), and the two may even transpose. This is covered in Game 26.

**Game 24**  
**V.Anand-M.Carlsen**  
**Kristiansund (rapid) 2010**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 O-O 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 Bb3 (Diagram 2) 10...Nxd4**

This is the move which gives this chapter its independence, but Black has several options here. He can simply play 10...Rc8 when 11 O-O-O (or 11 h4 h5, heading into the Soltis) simply brings us back to the main lines. Playing 10...Rb8 here is not so good because after 11 Nxc6 (White could also play 11 h4 Na5 12 h5 – see below) 11...bxc6 12 Bxa7 Black does not have anything to show for the pawn. Black has another independent alternative in 10...Na5, but White has done well with 11 h4! (instead 11 O-O-O Rb8 brings us back to the Chinese) and then:

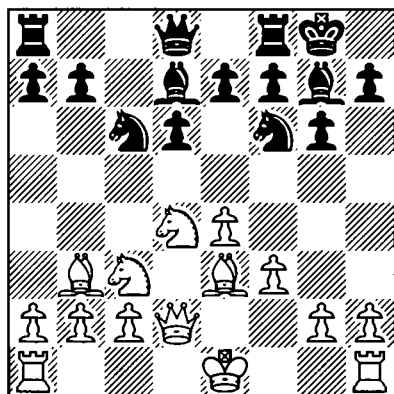
- a) 11...Rb8?! is not the same as the Chinese Variation, because White's attack is very strong after 12 h5 Nxb5 (even worse is 12...b5? 13 h5 hxg6 hxg6 14 Bh6 and 12...Nxb3 13 axb3 looks much better for White too) 13 g4 Nf6 14 Bh6.
- b) 11...Qc7 is sometimes played, but White has done well after 12 h5 (also possible are 12 O-O-O and 12 Bh6) 12...Nc4 13 Bxc4 Qxc4 14 O-O-O.
- c) 11...Nxb3 12 axb3 h5 looks reasonable, but White can also consider 12 cxb3!?



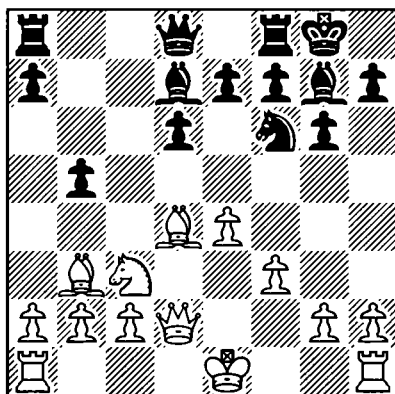
followed by castling queenside when his king should be safer than Black's.

d) 11...h5!? is the best alternative. After 12 O-O-O (12 Bh6!?) 12...Rc8 13 Bg5 Rc5 the position is a Soltis Variation with Black's knight on a5 instead of e5.

**11 Bxd4 b5 (Diagram 3)**



**Diagram 2 (B)**



**Diagram 3 (W)**

This is the starting point for this chapter. Black's queenside advance is very logical strategically, although White does not have to 'castle into it'.

**12 a4**

This is a positional approach. Depending on Black's reaction, White may castle on either side. Instead 12 h4 will be considered in the next two games, while other moves are less dangerous:

a) 12 O-O-O looks rather naive: 12...a5 (12...Rc8 returns play to Chapter 3) 13 e5 dxe5 14 Bxe5 and now Black can play the simple 14...Bc6 with equality or go for complications with 14...a4 15 Bd5 Rc8 16 Bb7 Rc7.

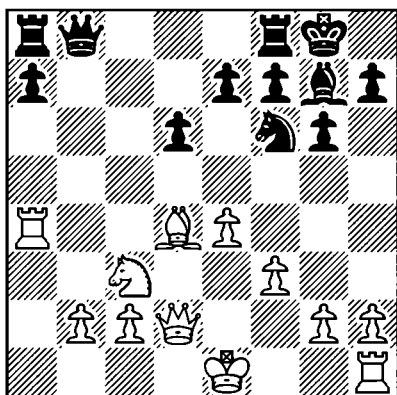
b) 12 O-O is solid enough, although this kind of position has little to do with the Yugoslav Attack. Here 12...a5 13 a3 Bc6 was fairly level in L.Christiansen-A.Shabalov, Saint Louis 2011.

c) 12 Nd5 Nxd5 13 exd5 Bxd4 14 Qxd4 a5 reaches a position similar to the main lines of the Topalov Variation, but here Black has not bothered to play ...Rc8. In Chapter 3 we saw that the rook is often better on b8 or even a8, so this should favour Black. One recent example went 15 a3 Qc7 16 O-O-O Rfc8 17 Rd2 Bf5 18 Qf2 a4 19 Ba2 b4 and Black had the initiative in A.Naiditsch-D.Jakovenko, Dortmund 2009.

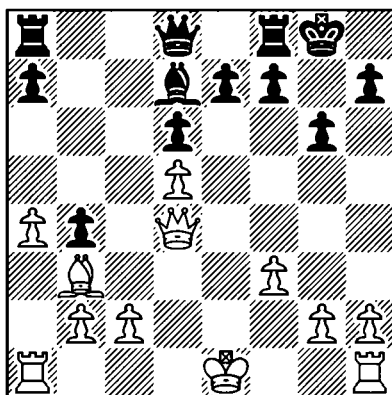
**12...b4**

This is a solid continuation, although it is a little passive. The alternative is to open the position with 12...bxa4 13 Bxa4 (13 Nxa4 Be6 has done well for Black) when Black must be careful because his a7-pawn is a target: 13...Bxa4 (instead both 13...Rb8 14 Bxd7 Nxd7 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 b3 and 13...Be6 14 O-O Qc7 15 Bb5 a5 16 Ra4 Rfb8 17 Rfa1 give White pressure on the a-file, while 13...e5 14 Be3 Be6 15 Rd1! Rb8 16 b3 Qa5 17 Nd5 Qxd2+ 18 Rxd2 Bxd5 19 exd5 a6 20 Bc6 gave White a clear advantage in the ending in S.Grigoriantz-U.Atakisi, Dresden 2007) 14 Rxa4 and now 14...a5 gives White a simple advantage as in the lines above: for example, 15 O-O Nd7 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Qd4+ e5 (after 17...Kg8, both 18 Rfa1 and 18 Nd5 give White a pleasant advantage) 18 Qxd6 Nb6 19 Qxd8 Rfxd8 20 Ra2 left Black with little to show for the pawn in D.Jakovenko-S.Maze, Fuegen 2006.

However, Black does better here with 14...Qb8!? (**Diagram 4**).



**Diagram 4 (W)**



**Diagram 5 (B)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** With this move Black intends to bring all his major pieces to the queenside to create counterplay on the b- and c-files.

After 15 O-O Rc8 16 b3 Black should not rush to commit his pawn structure. Some examples:

a) 16...e6 creates an additional weakness on d6. After 17 Rfa1 Ne8 18 Kh1 (Khalifman suggests 18 Nd1 Bxd4+ 19 Rxd4 Qb6 20 Ne3 with a clear advantage) 18...Bxd4 19 Qxd4 Rc5 20 b4 Rc7 21 b5 and White kept up the pressure in Z.Efimenko-E.Hossain, Moscow 2008.

b) With 16...e5 Black accepts weaknesses on d5 and d6 in the hope of creating pressure on the c-file. Here 17 Be3 Qc7 18 Rc4 Qd7 19 Ra4 Qc7 20 Rc4 Qd7 21 Ra4 Qc7 22 Rc4 ½-½ was J.Binas-A.Fagudes, correspondence 2001, but Khalifman gives the improvement 19 Rxc8+ Rxc8 20 Ra1 Qc6 21 Na2!. With this clever move White intends c4 and 21...Qxc2? would lose to 22 Rc1.

c) 16...Qb7 (this flexible move of Guseinov looks best) 17 Rfa1 a6 18 R1a2 e6 (instead 18...Rc6 19 Nd5 Nxd5 20 exd5 Bxd4+ 21 Rxd4 Rc5 was level in O.Kurmann-G.Guseinov, Aix-les-Bains 2011, but White could have tried 19 Nd1!?) 19 Kh1 Rc6 20 Nd1 Rac8 (or 20...d5) 21 Rb4 Qc7 22 c4 d5! 23 exd5 exd5 24 c5 Nd7 (24...Bf8!?) 25 Bxg7 Kxg7 26 Rh4 Nf6 27 b4 Re6 28 Nc3 Rce8 29 Ra1 a5 30 Rg1 axb4 31 Nxd5 Nxd5 32 Qxd5 was agreed drawn in S.Ganguly-G.Guseinov, Dubai 2011.

### **13 Nd5 Nxd5 14 Bxg7**

Instead 14 Bxd5 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 Rc8 16 Bb3 Qa5 is fine for Black, as White cannot castle long without dropping the a4-pawn and 17 h4 could be met by 17...Rc5 or 17...Be6!?. White can play 14 exd5 immediately, however, when play is similar to the main game and may even transpose. After 14...Bxd4 (both 14...Qa5 and 14...a5 are also possible) 15 Qxd4 (**Diagram 5**) Black has:

a) 15...a5 16 h4 (instead 16 O-O-O?! allows 16...Qe8!, while 16 O-O is pretty harmless: 16...Re8 17 Rae1 Rc8 18 Re2 e5 19 dxe6 Bxe6 20 Rfe1 Qd7 with equality in E.Berg-R.Robson, Tromsøe 2009) 16...e5 17 dxe6 Bxe6 18 O-O-O Bxb3 19 cxb3 Re8 20 Kb1 Re2 21 h5 Qg5 with a couple of examples:

a1) 22 hxg6 Qxg6+ 23 Ka2 Rae8 24 Rd2 Re1 25 Rd1 (White could try 25 Rxe1 Rxe1 26 Qd3!? when his own king is boxed in, but his rook is free to go after Black's queenside pawns) 25...R1e2 26 Rd2 Re1 27 Rd1 ½-½ E.Berg-P.Carlsson, Stockholm 2007.

a2) 22 h6!? Qe5 23 Qxe5 dxe5 24 Rd5 Kf8 25 Rc1 Rxg2 26 Rcc5 Rh2 27 Rxa5 Rxa5 28 Rxa5 Ke7? (28...Rxh6 was a better try) 29 Rxe5+ Kd6 30 Re4 Rxh6 31 Rxb4 and White's pawns proved to be much faster in E.Berg-D.Smerdon, Liverpool 2007.

b) 15...Qb6 (Black accepts weak doubled pawns, but he can attack White's a4-pawn) 16 Qxb6 axb6 17 Kd2 and now:

b1) 17...Ra5 18 Rhe1 Re8 19 Re4 b5 20 Rxb4 bxa4 21 c4 Rea8 22 Rb7 Be8 23 Bc2 e6 24 dxe6 was drawn here in W.Hartston-A.Adorjan, Hastings 1973/4, although White still has some initiative.

b2) 17...e5 18 dxe6 fxe6 19 Ke3 d5 20 Rhd1 Ra5 21 Rd4 b5 22 Rxb4 Rfa8 and Black held a draw in I.Kurnosov-B.Macieja, Lublin 2010.

c) 15...Qa5 puts pressure on the a4-pawn. After 16 h4 (16 O-O Rac8 17 Rfe1 Rfe8 18

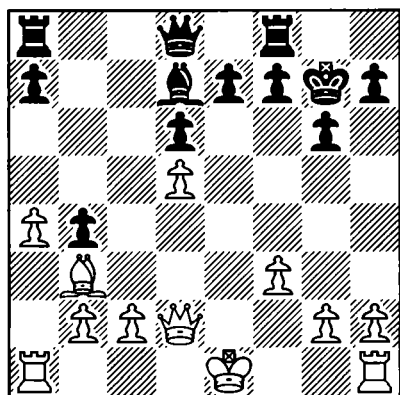
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Kh1 Qc5 19 Qh4 and 1/2-1/2 was the earlier V.Anand-M.Carlsen, Wijk aan Zee 2010)  
Black has:

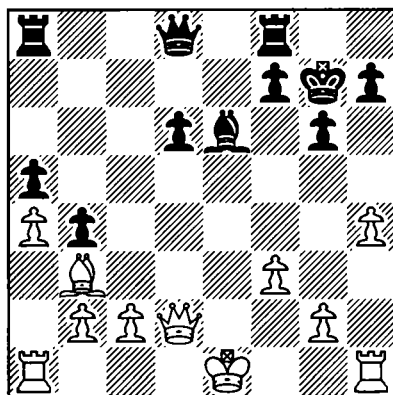
c1) 16...e5 (this allows White to castle long) 17 dxe6 Bxe6 18 O-O-O Bxb3 19 cxb3 Rfe8 20 Kb1 Re2 21 Qxd6 Qf5+ 22 Ka2 Rxc2 23 h5 and White had a slight initiative in D.Navara-V.Malakhov, Sibenik 2009.

c2) 16...Rac8 17 h5 Bf5 18 Qd2 gxh5! 19 Rxh5 Bg6 20 Rh4 Qb6 21 Kf1 a5 22 Re1 Rc7 23 Re2 was drawn in L.Dominguez Perez-V.Gashimov, Turin Olympiad 2006.

**14...Kxg7 15 exd5 (Diagram 6)**



**Diagram 6 (B)**



**Diagram 7 (W)**

The position is similar to the one after 14 exd5, but here White's queen is still on d2 and Black's king is on g7. I think White should prefer this position, as ...Qb6 will not challenge White's queen and in general White retains the possibility of Qd4+ anyway.

In this structure Black must choose how to protect his b-pawn. Defending it with the a-pawn is very solid, but the scope of Black's queen will then be limited. Black can also defend the pawn with his queen, but it may be more difficult to defend against a direct attack if the black queen is over on the queenside.

**15...a5**

This is very solid, but the queen moves should also be considered:

a) 15...Qb6 is less effective here: 16 h4! h5 (instead 16...h6 allows 17 O-O-O as the a4-pawn is not hanging and after 17...Qa5 18 h5 g5 19 f4 g4 20 Qd4+ Kg8 Khalifman gives 21 f5! Bxa4 22 f6 exf6 23 Qxg4+ Kh8 24 Qf4 with a winning attack) 17

### *Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5*

0-0-0 Qa5 18 g4 Bxa4 19 Bxa4 Qxa4 20 Qd4+ Kh6 was A.Shomoev-B.Savchenko, Moscow 2006. Now Khalifman gives the strong prophylactic move 21 Kb1! when White has a strong attack.

b) 15...Qa5 keeps pressure on the a4-pawn. After 16 h4 (instead 16 Qd4+ Kg8 is note 'c' to White's 14th move, above) we have:

b1) 16...h6 still looks insufficient: 17 Qd4+ Kg8 18 Qe3 (Khalifman gives 18 h5 g5 19 0-0 Qc5 20 Qxc5 dxc5 21 f4 Rac8 22 Bc4 with a slight edge in the ending) 18...Kg7 19 Kf2 is perhaps a little better for White, as shown in a couple of games.

b2) 16...h5 and now:

b21) 17 Qd4+ Kh7 (Black should probably try 17...f6, as in variation 'b22') 18 g4 Qc5 19 Qxc5 dxc5 20 gxh5 gxh5 21 0-0-0 Kg7 was T.Kosintseva-E.Iturrizaga, Moscow 2010. Here Jones gives 22 d6 e6 23 Rhg1+ Kf6 24 Rg5 with a clear plus.

b22) 17 g4 Rh8 18 Qd4+ f6 19 Kf2 Qb6 20 Qxb6 axb6 21 Kg3 hxg4 22 fxg4 f5 gave Black enough counterplay in the ending in R.Robson-B.Finegold, 4th matchgame, Saint Louis 2011.

#### **16 h4**

Instead 16 Qd4+ Kg8 is Berg-Robson in note 'a' to White's 14<sup>th</sup> move.

#### **16...e5**

Black needs to strike in the centre, because after 16...h5 17 Qd4+ with the idea of g4 he lacks counterplay.

#### **17 dxe6 Bxe6 (Diagram 7)**

We have come across this structure a few times. White has a sounder pawn structure and his king will be safe on the queenside, so Black must use his lead in development to fight for the initiative.

#### **18 0-0-0**

After this move Black is able to generate enough activity to hold the balance. White should prefer Khalifman's suggestion 18 Bxe6 and then:

a) 18...Re8 19 0-0-0 Rxe6 20 h5 Qe7 21 hxg6 fxg6 22 Rhe1 with a clear advantage. Black's king is exposed and his d- and a-pawns are weak.

b) 18...fxe6 looks more dynamic, but White still keeps an edge after 19 0-0-0 d5 20 h5 Rc8 (Jones mentions 20...h6 21 Rde1 Rf6 22 hxg6 Rxg6 23 Rh5 maintaining a strong initiative) 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 Kb1 Qf6 23 Qh6+ Kf7 24 Qe3 Kg7 25 Rd4 Rh8 26 Re1 (Khalifman) when Black's position remains uncomfortable.

#### **18...Bxb3 19 cxb3 Re8**

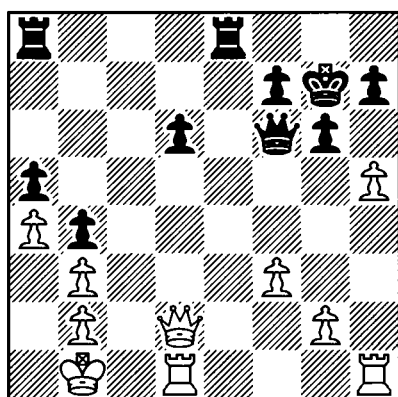
## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

Activating the rook is much stronger than 19...Qc8+ 20 Kb1 Qf5+ 21 Ka2 when White's king is where it wants to be. Black just gave up the d6-pawn with 21...h5 in F.Nijboer-R.Aloma Vidal, Barbera del Valles 2007, because 21...Rfd8 22 h5 gxh5 23 Qd5 would leave White with a big advantage.

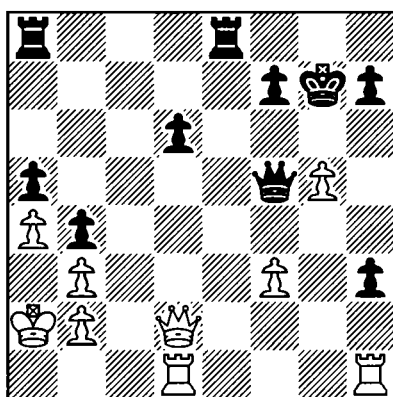
### **20 h5**

Black has a lot of activity after 20 Qxd6?! Rc8+ 21 Kb1 Qxd6 22 Rxd6 Re2 23 Rc1 Rce8 24 Rc2 Re1+ and now White would have to acquiesce to a draw with 25 Rc1 R1e2 because 25 Ka2? would lose to 25...Rh1.

### **20...Qf6 21 Kb1 (Diagram 8)**



**Diagram 8 (B)**



**Diagram 9 (W)**

Here 21 Qxd6!? is suddenly possible. After 21...Rac8+ 22 Kb1 Qxd6 White has 23 h6+! Kf8 (if 23...Kf6 24 Rxd6+) 24 Rxd6 Re2 25 Rc1 Rce8 26 Rc2 Re1+ because 27 Ka2! now works: for example, 27...Rh1 28 Rd7 Ree1 (or 28...Rxh6 29 Rcc7) 29 Rc8+ Re8 30 Rcc7.

### **21...gxh5!**

Black is able to hold the balance with this concrete move.

### **22 g4**

White cannot play 22 Rxh5?? Qg6+. Black was also fine after 22 Ka2 Re5 in I.Nataf-S.Arkipov, Biel 1999.

### **22...h4**

This is safer than opening lines on the kingside with 22...hxg4 when both 23 Rdg1 and 23 fxg4 would give White the initiative.

### **23 g5**

After this move Black's queen takes up a strong post. The alternative was 23 Qf2, but then 23...h6 24 Rxh4 Re6 25 Rh5 Rae8 26 Rxa5 (Jones gives 26 Rf5 Re2 27 Qxe2 Qxf5+ 28 Qd3 Qxd3+ 29 Rxd3 f5! when Black has no problems at all in the rook ending) 26...Re2 27 Qd4 Qxd4 28 Rxd4 Rf2 29 Re4 Rc8 30 Rc4 Re8 results in a repetition.

### **23...Qf5+**

Black clings to the h-pawn. He could also play 23...Qxf3 24 Rxh4 Re2 with counterplay.

### **24 Ka2 h3 (Diagram 9) 25 Rh2**

After 25 Qxd6 Re2 26 Qh6+ Kg8 27 Rxh3 (or 27 Qxh3 Qxh3 28 Rxh3 Rc8 – Jones) Black can immediately force a draw with 27...Rxb2+ 28 Kxb2 Qe5+ 29 Kb1 (not 29 Ka2?? Qe2+) 29...Qf5+ 30 Ka1 (30 Ka2 Qc2+) 30...Qe5+.

### **25...Kg8! 26 Rdh1 Rac8 27 Qxd6**

Black is also fine after 27 Rxh3 Rc2 28 Qxd6 Qe5!.

### **27...Rc2 28 Rxc2**

Again, 28 Rxh3 Qe5 29 Qxe5 Rxe5 is level.

### **28...Qxc2 29 Rxh3 Re1 30 Qd8+ Kg7 31 Qf6+ Kg8 ½-½**

## **Game 25** **S.Ter Sahakyan-P.Tregubov** **Rijeka 2010**

### **1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5 12 h4 (Diagram 10)**

White begins his kingside attack. If we compared this position to that of Game 17, here White has not yet castled and Black has not played ...Rc8. It is difficult to say who this favours – Black's rook may be better on a8 or b8 and of course it can still go to c8, while White's king is not yet a target on the queenside and his own attack has started one tempo faster, but his king will not be happy in the centre for too long either.

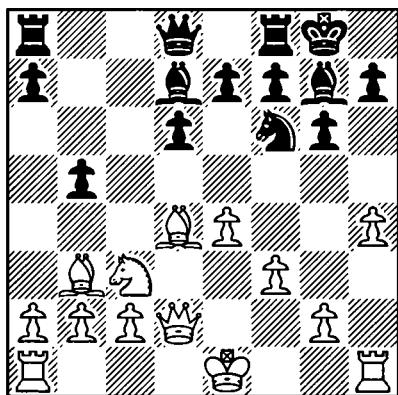
### **12...a5**

Black must focus on his own play because 12...h5?! 13 g4! is very strong for White.

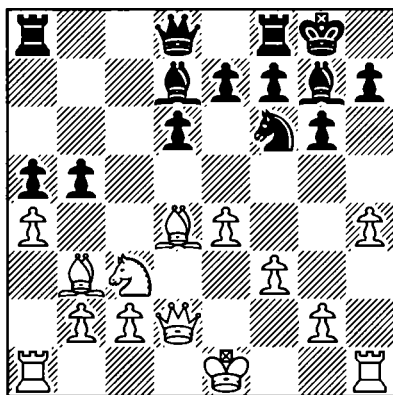
### **13 a4 (Diagram 11)**

Although this move saves the bishop, it does seem strange to play 12 h4 followed

by 13 a4 because White's king will not find an ideal refuge anywhere on the board. This used to be White's main method of playing with an early Bc4-b3, but modern players tend to prefer the positional method from Game 24 or the more consistent attacking play of Game 26. White can, indeed, ignore the threat to his bishop with 13 h5, which is considered in the next game.



**Diagram 10 (B)**



**Diagram 11 (B)**

#### **13...bxa4**

Now that White has committed himself on the kingside this is logical, as positional plans with kingside castling would not fit in well with White's 12th move. Black could play 13...b4 14 Nd5 Nxd5 when 15 exd5 would transpose to note 'a' to White's 14th move in the last game and 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 exd5 would transpose to that game. However, White could also try 16 Bxd5!? Rc8 17 h5 which looks rather dangerous for Black.

#### **14 Nxa4 (Diagram 12)**

White plays to exploit the b6-square. After 14 Bxa4 the positional plan to pressure the a-pawn does not work so well with h2-h4. Black has done well with both 14...Rb8 and 14...Bxa4, while 14...h5!? is also possible.

#### **14...Be6!**



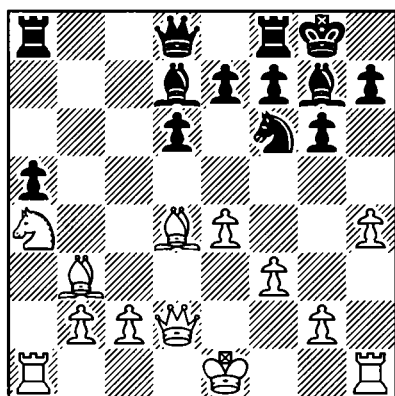
**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Black keeps a compact position and offers an exchange of bishops. If they are exchanged on e6 or b3 Black can be happy with the change in pawn structure.



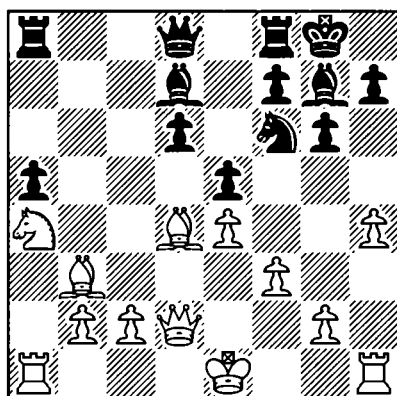
*Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5*

There are some other possibilities such as 14...Rb8!? and 14...h5!?, but the main continuation has always been 14...e5 (**Diagram 13**).

Way back in the early 1990's when I was studying this system for Black (I was reaching this position from an Accelerated Dragon), this was the absolute main line of 10...Nxd4. White is playing on both flanks, so it is logical to strike in the centre. Overall Black has done pretty well here, but I can see why the tide has turned in favour of 14...Be6. After 14...e5 White has:



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (W)**

a) 15 Bc3 has been played in many games, but none since 1993! Any pressure on the a5-pawn is illusory, as the a4-knight is stranded because White has given up control of the b6-square. After 15...Be6 16 O-O-O (16 Bxe6 fxe6 may be a better try) 16...Bxb3 17 cxb3 Qb8! 18 Qc2 Black can play 18...d5 (alternatives are plentiful; indeed, 18...Rd8, 18...Rc8, and 18...h5!? are possible as well) 19 exd5 Rd8 with excellent play.

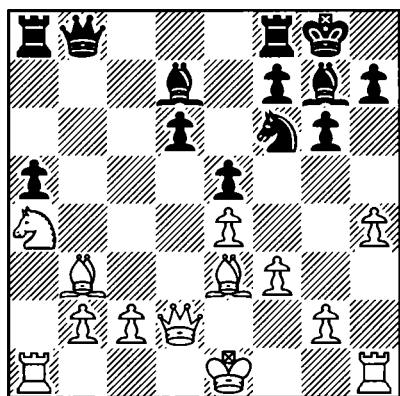
b) 15 Be3 is the most common retreat, but it has scored poorly for White: 15...Be6 16 Nb6 (here 16 Ra3 Rb8! does not help White) and now Black has a pleasant choice between 16...Rb8 17 Qxa5 (17 Bxe6 fxe6 18 Qxa5 d5) 17...Bxb3 18 cxb3 d5! and 16...Ra6 17 Nd5 Bxd5 18 Bxd5 (18 exd5 e4!) 18...Nxd5 19 Qxd5 Qc7 20 c3 Rb8, in both cases with excellent counterplay.

c) 15 Bb6! is the most annoying move, leading after 15...Qb8 to:

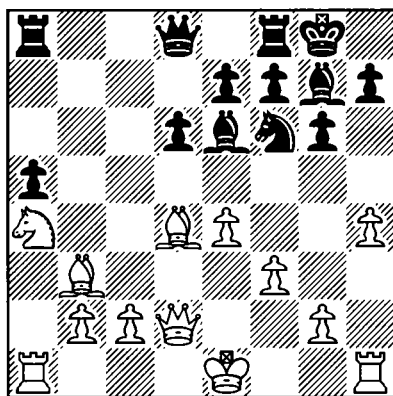
c1) 16 Bxa5?! is too greedy: 16...Ra6 17 Bc4 Bh6 18 Qc3 (White is in trouble after 18 Qxh6 Rxa5 19 b3 Bxa4 20 bxa4 Qb2!) 18...Rc8 19 b3 (White should probably give up his queen with 19 Bxa6 Rxc3 20 Nxc3 Qxb2 21 O-O) 19...Qa7! 20 Bb4 Bb5 and White's position is collapsing.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

c2) After 16 Be3! (**Diagram 14**) compared to variation 'b' Black has an extra tempo with ...Qb8, but it turns out that the black queen can become vulnerable to attack: 16...Be6 (Black should consider the untried 16...Bb5!? with the idea of ...Rd8) 17 Ra3! (this move justifies White's decision to lure the black queen to b8) 17...Qb4 (White also stood much better after 17...Qc7 18 O-O Rab8 19 Rd1 Rfd8 20 Bxe6 fxe6 21 Rb3 Rxb3 22 cxb3 in F.Pessoa-R.Ellis, correspondence 2008) 18 Nb6 Rab8 19 Qxb4 axb4 20 Ra5 (White plays for control of the d5-square, but 20 Ra7!? with the idea 20...Bxb3 21 cxb3 d5 22 Nxd5 Nxd5 23 exd5 Rfd8 24 Ra5 looks promising) 20...Bxb3 21 cxb3 Rfd8 22 Ke2 Nh5 23 Rc1 and White kept an edge in V.Topalov-S.Tiviakov, Wijk aan Zee 1996.



**Diagram 14 (B)**



**Diagram 15 (W)**

Now we return to 14...Be6! (**Diagram 15**):

### 15 Bxe6

There is no reason for White to allow the Black to take on b3, so he exchanges himself, hoping to go to work on Black's kingside. The alternative is to bring his knight back into play immediately with 15 Nb6 Ra6 16 Nd5. After 16...Bxd5 17 exd5 Qc7 18 Ra4 Rb8 (**Diagram 16**) we reach a position that has seen some high-level action.

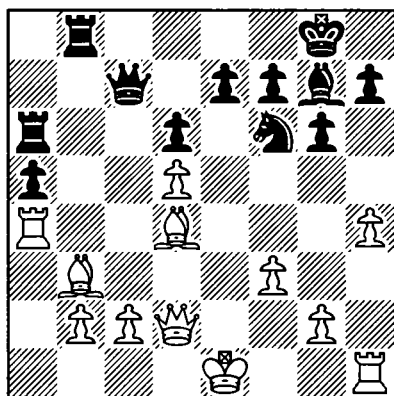
White has the bishop pair and some attacking chances, but Black's position is harmonious and White's king is not completely safe in the centre. White has:

a) 19 h5 Nxh5 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 g4 Nf6 22 Qh6+ Kg8 23 Rf4 Qc5! (Ivanchuk considered this to be dubious, but White has serious attacking chances after 23...a4 24 Rxf6 exf6 25 Kf2! or 23...Rxb3 24 Rxf6 exf6 25 Kd2! when his rook has access to the

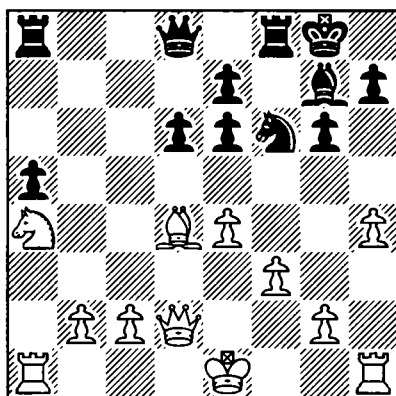
*Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5*

e-file) 24 Rxf6 exf6 25 Kd1?! (White should just play 25 Qxh7+ Kf8 26 Qh8+ Ke7 27 Qxb8 when Black will give perpetual check) 25...Rxb3 (Black could also consider 25...Qd4+ 26 Kc1 Raa8 with the idea 27 Qxh7+ Kf8 28 Re1 f5) 26 cxb3 Qxd5+ 27 Kc2 Rc6+ 28 Kb1 Qd3+ 29 Ka2 g5! 30 Qxf6 Qg6 and Black was a little better in A.Shirov-V.Ivanchuk, Wijk aan Zee 1999.

b) 19 0-0 Nd7! 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 h5 Nc5 (instead 21...Qc5+ 22 Kh2 Rb4 was B.Macieja-A.Shirov, 2nd matchgame, Bydgoszcz (rapid) 2001, and here 23 Qe2! would have won a pawn) 22 Rh4 Nxb3 23 cxb3 Qc5+ 24 Kh2 Rb4 25 h6+ Kf8 26 Rc1!? (26 Rxb4 Qxb4 27 Qxb4 axb4 28 Rc1 Ra8 is level) 26...Rxh4+ 27 Kg3 Rb4 (27...Rh5!?) 28 Rxc5 dxc5 29 Qc3 f6 30 Qxc5 Rb8 31 Qc7 Rba8 32 Kf4 Rd6 was equal but still complex in B.Brinck Claussen-C.Ward, Copenhagen 2002.



**Diagram 16 (W)**



**Diagram 17 (W)**

c) 19 Kf2!? is flexible. Now:

c1) 19...Nd7 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 h5 Nf6 22 hxg6 fxg6 23 g4! Qc5+ 24 Kg2 Rb4 25 Qh6+ (White could keep an edge with 25 Rxb4 axb4 26 Re1 or 25 Rha1 Rxa4 26 Rxa4) 25...Kg8 26 g5 Nh5 27 Rxh5 gxh5 28 g6 was B.Macieja-A.Shirov, 4th matchgame, Bydgoszcz (rapid) 2001. White should have no more than a perpetual here and after mutual errors the game ended in a draw.

c2) 19...h5 20 Re1 Ne8 21 Bxg7 Nxg7 (instead 21...Kxg7 22 Rae4! a4 was A.Motylev-S.Kudrin, Minneapolis 2005, and here 23 Rxe7 Qc5+ 24 Kg3 would have left White a pawn up because 24...axb3 25 R1e6! Ra7 26 Rxc6+! would give him a decisive attack) 22 g4 Qd8 23 Kg2 Ra7 24 Qe3 Rab7 25 Re4 Rb4 and Black held firm in A.Shirov-V.Topalov, Moscow 2001.

**15...fxe6 (Diagram 17) 16 h5?!**

This is consistent, but Black is better developed so White will find it difficult to fight for the initiative. Alternatives are more sensible:

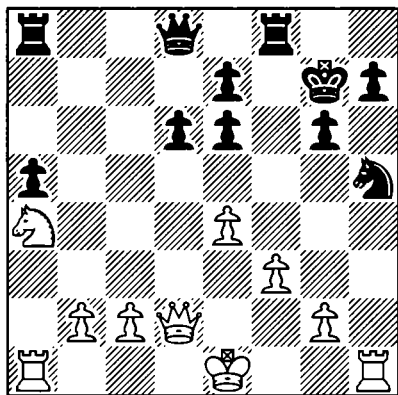
a) 16 g4 is a more restrained way to try to do something on the kingside: 16...Qc7 (16...Nd7 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 with the idea 18 h5 Ne5 also looks okay) 17 h5 Rab8 18 c3 Qc4 19 Qe2 Qxe2+ 20 Kxe2 Nd7 was again about level in J.Kratochvil-G.Poli, correspondence 2008.

b) 16 0-0 is safe, but after 16...Qc7 17 Ra3? allowed 17...Nxe4! 18 fxe4 Rxf1+ 19 Kxf1 Qc4+ in B.Zuckerman-D.Byrne, New York 1966.

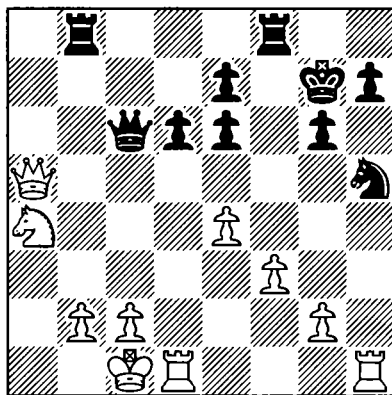
c) 16 Nc3 brings the knight back into play. Then 16...Nh5 17 Ne2 e5 18 Be3 Nf4 was fairly even in M.Yilmazyerli-T.Georgescu, Fermo 2009.

d) 16 b3 Qc7 17 Qc3 Qb7 18 Qc4 d5 led to messy play in E.Berg-B.Macieja, Oslo 2009. Instead Black could have played the simple 18...Qb4+ 19 Qxb4 axb4 with equal chances.

**16...Nxe4 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 (Diagram 18)**



**Diagram 18 (W)**



**Diagram 19 (B)**

White has been hoping to create some attacking chances, but Black has done very well from here. He has an extra pawn and his pieces are well placed.

**18 0-0-0**

White tries to improve on 18 g4 Nf4 19 Qh2 h5 20 gxh5 when Black has a pleasant choice:

a) 20...Nxh5 21 0-0-0 (maybe White could try 21 Qg1!? Rh8 22 0-0-0 with the idea

of Qg5) 21...Qe8! 22 Nc3 Qf7 (22...a4 looks strong) 23 e5 d5 24 Nb5 Qf4+ 25 Qxf4 Nxf4 26 Rh4 (26 Nd4 would allow White to maintain some balance) was F. Van As-sendelft-W. Hendriks, Dieren 2007. Now 26...g5 27 Rg4 Rf5 28 Re1 Rc8 29 Kd2 Ng6 would win a pawn.

b) 20...e5 21 0-0-0 (or 21 hxg6 Rh8 with equal chances) 21...Rh8 22 h6+ Kh7 23 Qh4 Ra7 24 Rh2 Rb7 25 Nc5 Rb5 26 Nd3 Rf8 27 Qg5 a4 with counterplay in M. Mahjoob-O. Annageldyev, Kolkata 2001.

c) 20...g5 looks good: 21 h6+ Kh7 22 0-0-0 Qb8 23 Rdg1 Qb5 24 Nc3 Qe5 25 Rg4 (25 Qg3 Qxc3! would give Black a better ending with the passed a-pawn) 25...a4 26 Qd2 a3 27 b3 Rfc8 0-1 was R. Robson-S. Sjugirov, Kemer 2007.

### **18...Qe8 19 Nb6?!**

Both 19 Nc3 a4 and 19 b3 Qb5 would leave Black with the initiative, but this back-fires.

### **19...Rb8**

Perhaps White was counting on 19...Ra6 20 Qd3 with the idea 20...Rxa6? 21 Qd4+. The text is much stronger.

### **20 Qxa5**

White grabs the pawn because his position falls apart completely after 20 g4 (similar is 20 Nc4 Qb5 21 b3 a4) 20...Nf4 21 Qh2 h5 22 gxh5 g5 23 Nc4 Qb5 24 b3 a4.

### **20...Qc6**

The knight is driven back to the edge of the board.

### **21 Na4 (Diagram 19) 21...e5**

Of course Black avoids 21...Ra8? 22 Qc3+, but 21...Nf4 22 Nc3 Qb7 23 b3 e5! (better than 23...Rfc8 24 Qg5) cuts off White's queen and gives Black numerous threats.

### **22 Nc3 Nf4?!**

This natural move is much less convincing than 22...Qb7 or 22...Rfc8. Now White seizes his chance to complicate matters.

### **23 Qa7! Rb7 24 Qe3 Rfb8 25 g3**

This is forced, because 25 b3? would lose to 25...Rc8 26 Kb2 Rbc7.

### **25...Nh5 26 b3 Rc8 27 Rd3 Qa6 28 Kd2**

White could try to hold things together with 28 Na4, but instead he keeps his knight in the centre, hoping to create counterplay.

### **28...Qa5 (Diagram 20)**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

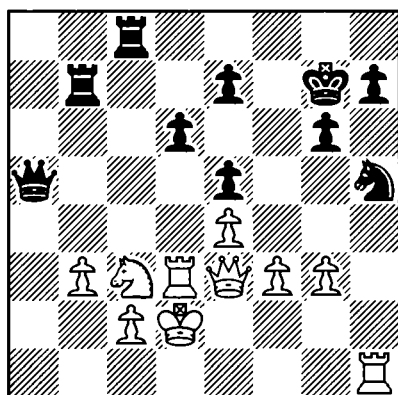
Now Black threatens ...Rbc7 when White will hardly be able to move. 28...Rbc7 immediately was also tempting, but White's next move was difficult to foresee.

**29 b4!?**

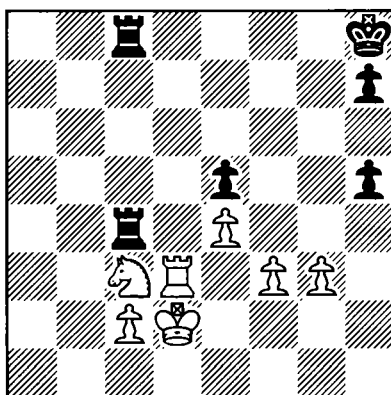
This shocking move is designed to deflect Black from the e7-pawn.



**TIP:** When your position is going downhill, it is important to look for possibilities to change the nature of the struggle. In this game White's king was under attack, so he sacrifices material to reach a position where both kings are exposed.



**Diagram 20 (W)**



**Diagram 21 (B)**

**29...Rxb4**

Of course not 29...Qxb4? 30 Rb1.

**30 Rxh5! gxh5 31 Qg5+ Kh8 32 Qxe7**

This was the point of White's play. Black's king is exposed and his pawns are a wreck, but it still seems that he has everything under control.

**32...Qd8 33 Qxd6 Qxd6 34 Rxd6 Rbc4 35 Rd3 (Diagram 21)**

It turns out that the ending is not so easy to win. It can be tough to adjust from coasting along with a direct attack to being forced to enter a difficult technical phase. Black tries for a while, but White held in the end.

**35...R4c7 36 Re3 Kg7 37 Rd3 Kf7 38 Re3 Ke6 39 Rd3 Rc6 40 Re3 Kf7 41 Rd3 Kg6 42 Nd5!**

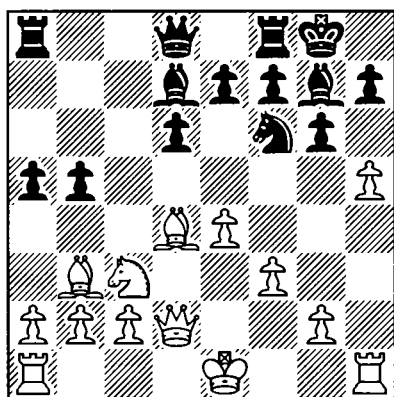
White cannot sit any longer, because 42 Re3 h4 would allow Black to create a passed pawn and bring his king decisively into play.

*Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5*

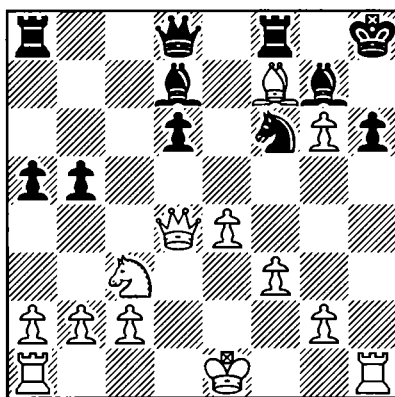
**42...Rxc2+ 43 Ke3 Rb8 44 f4 exf4+ 45 Nxf4+ Kf6 46 Nxh5+ Ke7 47 Ra3 Rcb2 48 Ra6 R8b6 49 Ra7+ Rb7 50 Ra6 R2b6 51 Ra8 Kf7 52 Kf3 Rb3+ 53 Kf4 R3b4 54 g4 Rb8 ½-½**

**Game 26**  
**D.Andreikin-R.Mamedov**  
**Lubbock 2009**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5 12 h4 a5 13 h5 (Diagram 22)**



**Diagram 22 (B)**



**Diagram 23 (W)**

White continues with his kingside attack and leaves the b3-bishop to its fate. Black cannot trap the bishop, but his queenside pawns will still help him to create useful counterplay.

**13...a4**

This is the most consistent move, but Black has also tried pushing his e-pawn:

a) 13...e5 looks too risky after 14 hxg6! (instead 14 Be3 a4 15 Bd5 b4 16 Ne2 takes play into note 'd32' to White's 14th move, below) 14...exd4 (Black has to take the piece, because after 14...hxg6 15 Be3 a4 16 Bh6! is too strong) 15 Bxf7+ Kh8 (this is risky, but after 15...Rxf7 16 gxf7+ Kxf7 both 17 Qxd4 and 17 Ne2 should favour White) 16 Qxd4 h6 (**Diagram 23**).



**WARNING:** Some very strong players have entered this position with Black, but White has three pawns and a strong initiative for the piece.

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

There are a couple of tempting ways to continue:

a1) 17 0-0-0 is natural. Now:

a11) 17...Be8 18 e5 Ng8 19 f4! (instead 19 Qf4 Rc8 was not so clear in E.Berg-G.Guseinov, Kusadasi 2006) 19...Bxf7 20 gxf7 Rxf7 21 g3! Qe8 22 Qxd6 and the pawns were worth more than the bishop in H.Daurelle-S.Martyshin, correspondence 2002.

a12) 17...b4 18 Nd5 (18 Qe3!) 18...Be8 19 Bxe8 Ng8! 20 Qb6  $\frac{1}{2}$ - $\frac{1}{2}$  was S.Karjakin-S.Tiviakov, Gothenburg 2005. After 20...Qxe8 21 Qxd6 Rd8 22 Qg3 Ne7 the position is not so clear.

a2) 17 Qe3! Ng8 18 g4 (18 0-0-0 as suggested by Monokroussos is also strong) and now:

a21) 18...b4 19 Nd5 Be8 20 g5 Bxf7 21 gxf7 (but not 21 gxh6? Bxd5) 21...Rxf7 22 0-0-0 Qf8 23 f4 Re8 24 gxh6 Bxh6 25 Rdg1 Ne7 26 Qa7 Kh7 27 Qd7 Ng8 28 Qh3 1-0 O.Rause-O.Ekebjær, correspondence 2002.

a22) 18...Be8 19 g5 Bxf7 20 gxh6 Bxg6 21 hxg7+ Kxg7 22 Nd5 Rf7 23 Kd2 Kf8 24 Rag1 Bh7 25 Qd4 1-0 J.Tejo-J.Makarczuk, correspondence 2003.

b) 13...e6 is worth exploring further, however. After 14 a4 bxa4 (Black lacks counterplay after 14...b4 15 Ne2) 15 Nxa4 we have:

b11) 15...Nxb5 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 g4 Nf6 (17...Bxa4!) 18 0-0-0 looks good for White. He has prospects on the h-file and could just take on d6. Now 18...Bxa4? fails to 19 Qh6+ Kg8 20 e5!.

b2) 15...Bxa4!? with the idea of ...Nxb5 looks risky but playable: for example, 16 Bxa4 (or 16 Rxa4 Nxb5 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 g4 Nf6) 16...Nxb5 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 g4 Nf6 19 0-0-0 h5!?

b3) 15...Bc6 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 g4! gives White excellent attacking chances: 17...d5 18 e5 Nd7 19 Qh2 f6 was M.Bartel-J.Pinheiro, Vila Nova de Gaia 2004, and here 20 Qh7+ Kf7 21 Rh6 would have been crushing.

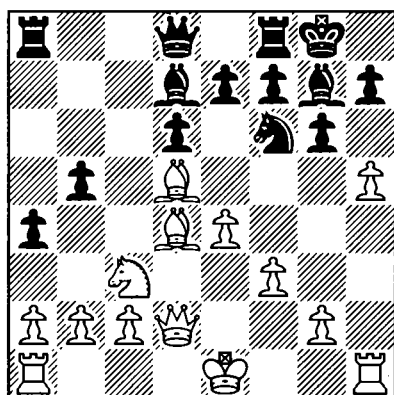
b4) 15...Rb8 16 hxg6 fxg6!? (instead 16...hxg6 17 Be3 Bxa4 18 Rxa4 Rb5 19 g4 with the idea of Qh2 is good for White, as shown in the games A.Ivanov-M.Taleb, Moscow 2003, and I.Nepomniachtchi-B.Savchenko, Cheboksary 2006) 17 Bc3 Qe7 18 Bxa5 d5 19 e5 Nh5 20 Bc7 Ra8 (Black could have tried 20...Ng3!? with the idea 21 Rh3 Bxa4 22 Bd6? Qa7!) 21 Bd6 Qe8 22 Bxf8 Qxf8 23 Bxd5! gave White a material advantage in J.Friedel-A.Shabalov, Philadelphia 2006.

### **14 Bxf6**

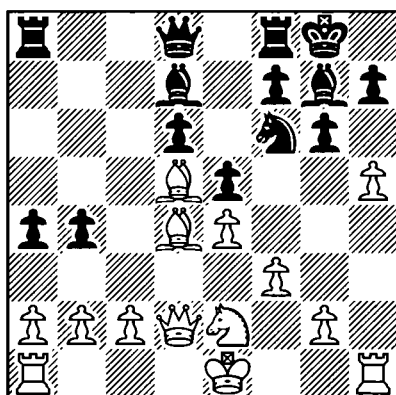
White takes the opportunity to shatter the Black pawn structure. The immediate



14 Bd5 (Diagram 24) is also possible.



**Diagram 24 (B)**



**Diagram 25 (W)**

This may transpose to the main line and in some ways this move is more flexible, since White does not commit to giving up his dark-squared bishop. However, Black has additional possibilities to avoid the main line as well:

- a) 14...Rc8 15 hxg6 hxg6 and now 16 Bxf6 exf6 17 Rh6!? would transpose to the note to Black's 15th move, below, but White could also try 16 a3!.
- b) 14...Rb8!? is more subtle: 15 hxg6 hxg6 16 Bxf6 (now 16 a3 can be met with 16...b4!) 16...exf6 17 Rh6 b4 18 Rxc6 Kh7 19 Rxc7+ Kxc7 20 Ne2 is similar to variation 'c' in the notes to Black's 15th move. Here the rook is less active on b8, but it does protect the b4-pawn.
- c) 14...e5 15 h6! (instead 15 hxg6?! can be met with 15...Nxd5!, while 15 Bxa8 exd4 16 Nd5 Nxh5 is unclear) and here:
  - c1) 15...Bh8 16 Bxa8! exd4 17 Nd5 should be good for White. The point is that 17...Qxa8?? runs into 18 Ne7 mate.
  - c2) 15...Bxh6 16 Qxh6 exd4 17 e5! Re8 (17...dxe5? 18 Ne4) 18 O-O-O Rxe5 (if 18...dxe5 19 Bxa8 dxc3 20 Bc6!) 19 Rxd4 Rc8 20 Ne4 Bf5 21 Bxf7+ Kxf7 22 Rxd6 Rxc2+? (better is 22...Qe7, although White keeps some advantage after 23 Rxf6+ Kg8 24 Rd6 Bxe4 25 fxe4 threatening Rxc6+) 23 Kb1 Qe7 24 Rxf6+ Qxf6 (or 24...Kg8? 25 Rf8+ Qxf8 26 Qxh7 mate) 25 Nxf6 Kxf6 26 Qf8+ Ke6 27 g4 with a decisive advantage in V.Bologan-S.Maze, French League 2008.
  - d) 14...b4! 15 Ne2 (15 Bxf6 exf6 16 Ne2 transposes to the main game) and now

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

15...Rc8 16 hxc6 hxc6 17 Bxf6 exf6 is the note to Black's 16th move. Instead 15...e5 (**Diagram 25**) gives White several options it is hardly clear which one is best:

d1) 16 h6!? Bh8 17 Bxa8 exd4 18 Bd5 Nxd5 19 exd5 a3 20 Rb1 axb2?! (Black could try 20...Re8 21 0-0 b3!? with one possibility being 22 axb3 Qb6 23 Kh2 d3 24 cxd3 a2 25 Ra1 Qxb3) 21 Rxb2 Re8 22 Rxb4 Qa5 23 0-0 Qxa2 24 Nxd4 Qxd5 25 c3 and Black did not have enough for the exchange in S.Ter Sahakyan-I.Iljushenok, Porto Carras 2010.

d2) 16 Bxa8 exd4 17 Bd5 Nxd5 18 exd5 a3! 19 0-0?! (White should try 19 h6, as above) 19...axb2 20 Rab1 Bb5 21 Rxb2 Bxe2 22 Qxe2 d3 23 cxd3 Bd4+ 24 Rf2 Re8 25 Qf1 Qh4 26 h6 Bxb2 0-1 D.Mieles Palau-S.Alonso, Vicente Lopez 2005.

d3) 16 Be3 is the safest move, but Black should have no problems after 16...Nxd5 17 Qxd5 (17 exd5 gives Black a great position with many promising possibilities, such as 17...Rc8, 17...Rb8, 17...Qe7, 17...e4, and 17...a3) 17...Be6 18 Qd2 and then:

d31) 18...Qc7 19 c3 (19 Bh6 is well met by 19...Bxh6! 20 Qxh6 Rfc8 21 hxc6 fxc6 with the idea of ...Ra6-c6) 19...b3 20 a3 d5! 21 hxc6 fxc6 22 exd5 Rad8 and Black had the initiative in A.Berescu-T.Georgescu, Eforie Nord 2009.

d32) 18...d5!? 19 hxc6 hxc6 (Black also had good play after 19...fxg6 20 Bc5 Rf7 21 Bxb4 Rd7 22 exd5 Rxd5 23 Qe3 Bf5 in T.Tolnai-P.Leko, Hungarian League 1992) 20 Bh6?! (better is 20 Bc5, although Black has good chances after the simple 20...Re8 or 20...dxe4!? 21 Bxf8 Qxf8) 20...dxe4 21 Qe3 exf3 22 Bxg7 Kxg7 23 gxf3 (if 23 Qh6+ Kf6 24 Qh4+ g5) 23...Qa5 (simpler was 23...Rh8 24 Qxe5+ Qf6 25 Qxf6+ Kxf6 with a comfortable advantage in the ending) 24 Qh6+ Kf6 25 Ng3 b3+ 26 c3 Bd5 was S.Iuldachev-G.Guseinov, Tashkent 2010. Black is a pawn up and has the better chances, although both kings are rather exposed.

Returning to the immediate exchange on f6:

### **14...exf6**

Black cannot play 14...Bxf6? because of 15 hxc6 hxc6 16 Qh6.

### **15 Bd5 (Diagram 26) 15...b4**

Black can also consider 15...Rc8 16 hxc6 hxc6 and now 17 0-0-0 f5 transposes directly to Game 17 in the Topalov Variation, but White can also try 17 Rh6!? and then:

a) 17...Be6? lost quickly after 18 Rxc6! Bxd5 19 Rg3 in R.Felgaer-E.Scarella, Buenos Aires 2004.

b) 17...g5!? 18 Rh5 a3 was unclear in M.Aguilar-S.Alonso, Mendoza 2003.

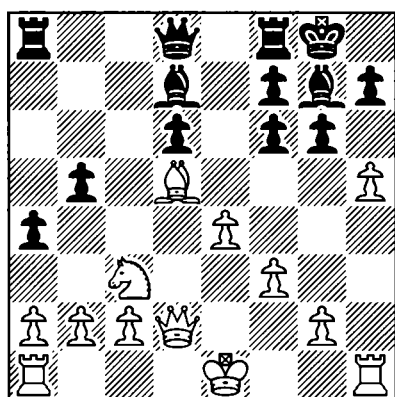
c) 17...b4 is critical. After 18 Rxc6 (not 18 Ne2?! Rxc2! 19 Qxc2 Bxh6) 18...Kh7 19

Rxg7+ Kxg7 20 Ne2 White has compensation for the exchange, but no more than that. A couple of examples:

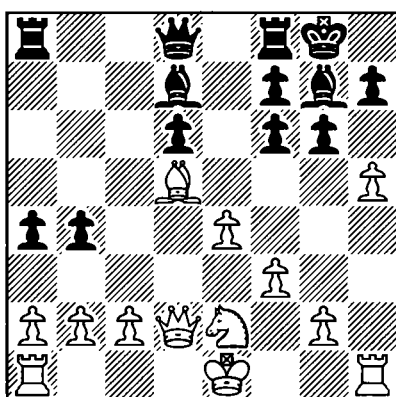
c1) 20...Qb6 21 Nd4 Rh8 22 0-0-0 Rh2? 23 Qf2 (White threatens both Qg3+ and Nf5+) 23...Kh8 24 Bxf7 with a big advantage for White in M.Apicella-D.Moldovan, Bucharest 1993.

c2) 20...a3 21 b3 (21 0-0-0!?) 21...f5 22 0-0-0 Qf6 23 Nd4 Rc3 24 exf5 Rfc8 25 g4 Rxc2+ 26 Qxc2 Rxc2+ 27 Kxc2 Qe5 gave Black a winning position in U.Eliseev-V.Belous, Moscow 2010.

**16 Ne2 (Diagram 27) 16...f5!**



**Diagram 26 (B)**



**Diagram 27 (B)**

This is stronger than 16...Rc8 17 hxg6 hxg6 when White can transpose to the note to Black's 16th move in Game 17 with 18 0-0-0 f5 19 Nd4 fxe4 20 fxe4. Here White has another good option in 18 g4! Qc7 (Monokroussos suggests Black should try 18...a3 19 bxa3 bxa3 20 Nf4 Re8 21 Nxg6 Be6 22 Bxe6 fxe6 23 Rb1 f5 which is at least less clear) 19 Nd4 a3 20 0-0-0 axb2+ 21 Kb1 Rfe8 22 Bb3 Qa5 23 Nf5 gxf5 24 gxf5 d5 25 Rdg1 and 1-0 in A.Ivanov-W.Kelleher, Marlboro 2002.

**17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Bxa8**

There is not much better at this point: 18 exf5 Bxf5 19 g4 Be6 20 Bxa8 Qxa8 21 Kf2 Rc8 gave Black excellent play for the exchange in J.Moreno Carnero-O.Korneev, Port Erin 2003, while 18 Qxb4 a3 19 c3 axb2 20 Qxb2 Rc8 also gave Black a promising position in D.Stellwagen-S.Tiviakov, Hilversum 2007.

**18...Qxa8 19 Qxd6**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

White lost quickly after 19 Qxb4 fxe4 20 O-O Qa7+ 21 Rf2 exf3 22 gxf3 Rb8 23 Qxd6 a3 24 Rb1 axb2 25 Kg2 Be6 and 0-1 in M.Petr-D.Chuprov, Pardubice 2008.

### 19...Bb5 (Diagram 28)

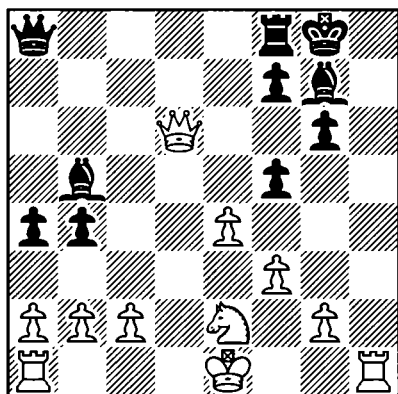


Diagram 28 (W)

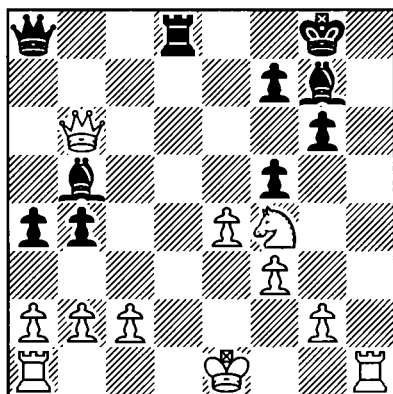


Diagram 29 (B)



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This position has received some practical tests in the last few years. Black has excellent play for the exchange with two raking bishops and a much safer king.

### 20 Nf4

Black also has good play after other moves:

- a) 20 Qxb4 Bxe2 21 Kxe2 fxe4 22 fxe4 a3! is rather annoying for White.
- b) 20 Nd4 Rd8 (or 20...a3!? 21 Qxb4 axb2 22 Rb1 Ba6 23 Rxb2 fxe4 with compensation – Khalifman) 21 Qxb4 and then:
  - b1) 21...Bxd4!? 22 Qxb5 a3 is given by Khalifman. White could try 22 O-O-O!?, however.
  - b2) 21...Rxd4! 22 Qxb5 fxe4 23 c3 (or 23 Rh3 a3! with sufficient counterplay) 23...exf3! 24 gxf3 (24 cxd4 Qe4+ 25 Kf2 Bxd4+ 26 Kg3 Be5+ 27 Kf2 Bd4+ is a draw) 24...Qxf3 25 Qe8+ Bf8 26 Rh8+ Kxh8 27 Qxf8+ Kh7 28 cxd4 Qe3+, again with a draw.

### 20...Rd8 21 Qb6 (Diagram 29)

Alternatives also fail to trouble Black against accurate play:

- a) 21 Qe7? fxe4! 22 Kf2 was played in I.Cheparinov-M.Leon Hoyos, Cuernavaca

*Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5*

2006. Here Monokroussos gives 22...e3+! when Black has a winning advantage: for example, 23 Kg3 Qb8! 24 Rad1 Re8 25 Qd6 Bxb2 26 Qxb8 Rxb8 with the idea of ...Bc4.

b) 21 Qxb4 Qb8 22 Ne2 (Black was winning after 22 Qe7? fxe4 23 Rd1 Re8 in A.Shetty-B.Finegold, Wheeling 2011) 22...Bf8 and now:

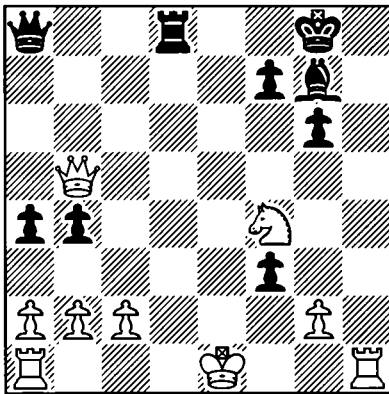
b1) 23 Qa5? Bxe2 24 Kxe2 Bb4 and Black has a winning attack. Khalifman gives 25 Qxa4 (or 25 Qa6 Rd6 26 Qc4 Rd2+ 27 Kf1 Qa7! 28 Qc8+ Bf8 29 Rh8+ Kxh8 30 Qc3+ Rd4) 25...Rd2+ 26 Kf1 Qg3 27 Qe8+ Bf8 28 Rh8+ Kxh8 29 Qxf8+ Kh7 30 Qxf7+ Kh6 31 Qf8+ Kh5 32 Qh8+ Kg5 and White will be mated.

b2) 23 Qc3 Bg7 24 Qb4 (it is risky to avoid the repetition with 24 Qa5?! Re8 25 Rd1 fxe4 26 f4 e3!) 24...Bf8 with a draw.

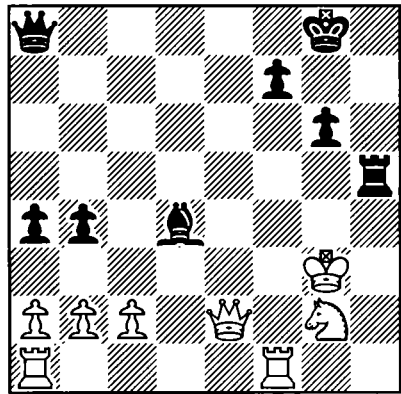
**21...fxe4!?**

This move gives up a piece to keep the game alive. After 21...Bxb2 22 Nd5 Khalifman points out that Black can force a draw with 22...Rxd5 23 exd5 Qe8+ 24 Kf2 Qe2+ 25 Kg3 Qe5+ 26 f4 Qc3+ 27 Kh2 Qh8+.

**22 Qxb5 exf3 (Diagram 30)**



**Diagram 30 (W)**



**Diagram 31 (B)**

Black is down a rook but White's king is in serious danger.

**23 0-0**

White evacuates the centre, but the king still finds no peace. Instead 23 Rd1 Qe4+ 24 Ne2 Rxd1+ 25 Kxd1 fxe2+ 26 Qxe2 Qd4+ 27 Qd2 Qxb2 forced White to take the draw with 28 Qd8+ Bf8 29 Qh4 Bg7 in E.Sutovsky-R.Mamedov, Moscow 2008.

**23...Bd4+ 24 Kh2 fxc2 25 Nxc2 Rd5 26 Qe2?**

This should lead to trouble. Safer was 26 Qc4 when Black has nothing better than perpetual check with 26...Rh5+ 27 Kg3 Rg5+ 28 Kh4 Rh5+.

**26...Rh5+ 27 Kg3 (Diagram 31) 27...Rg5+**



**TIP: When you have a draw in hand, it is a good time to look for something better! Here Black takes the draw, but 27...Be5+! would have won.**

Perhaps Black was in time pressure, so we cannot judge too harshly, but after 27...Be5+ White can hardly save the game. For example:

- a) 28 Kf2 Qa7+ 29 Ke1 (or 29 Kf3 Rh3+) 29...Bxb2 threatening the rook and ...Re5.
- b) 28 Nf4 Rg5+ 29 Kf2 (instead both 29 Kh2 and 29 Kh3 run into 29...Kg7! threatening ...Qh8+, while 29 Kh4 Qd8! wins as well) 29...Bxf4 with a winning position.
- c) 28 Rf4 a3! 29 Rd1 (or 29 bxa3 Rg5+ 30 Kh2 Bxa1) 29...axb2 and White cannot deal with Black's numerous threats.

**28 Kh2 Rh5+ 29 Kg3 ½-½**

## Conclusion

This chapter is unusual in that the critical lines are 'in reverse'. This is because Black has been more than holding his own in the sharp lines with 12 h4 a5 13 h5, so White has switched to more positional approaches involving the advance of the other rook pawn. The indecisive 12 h4 a5 13 a4 was the old main line, but 13...bxa4 14 Nxa4 Be6 gives Black good chances. Only 12 a4 remains promising, although Black is pretty solid here if he defends accurately.

## Part II

# 9 0-0-0 and 9 g4

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 (Diagram 1)

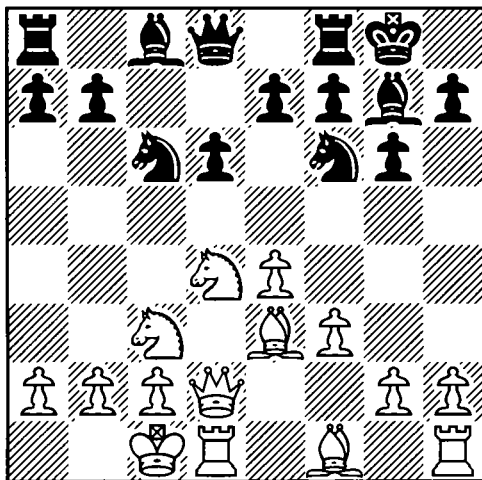


Diagram 1 (B)

Castling on move nine is the most natural continuation in my opinion, but it does allow the freeing move...

### **9...d5**

Black's alternatives 9...Nxd4 and 9...Bd7 are very risky, but they are sharp and have some practical appeal. They will be covered in Chapter 9.

After 9...d5, White's traditional approach has always been 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4. Here White is not going for an all-out attack; rather he is playing for a positional advantage based on his better pawn structure. Preserving the dark-squared bishops with the tempo-gaining 12...e5 has always been the main response, but lately Black has shifted his attention to the two lines where he exchanges pieces, 12...Bxd4 and 12...Nxc3. These lines are less dynamic, but Black is also less likely to face serious strategic problems. As we'll see in Chapter 6.

White has found new ideas too after 9...d5. Avoiding 10 exd5 with 10 Qe1 and the even more modern 10 Kb1 are interesting methods that have found many followers. Developments in these systems are covered in Chapters 7 and 8.

It is also possible for White to avoid facing 9...d5 altogether by playing 9 g4 instead of 9 O-O-O. This was always considered to be a distant third option (after 9 Bc4 and 9 O-O-O), but even here there are interesting new ideas, and there is certainly less theory than in the other lines. 9 g4 is covered in Chapter 10.



## Chapter Six

# 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 (Diagram 1)

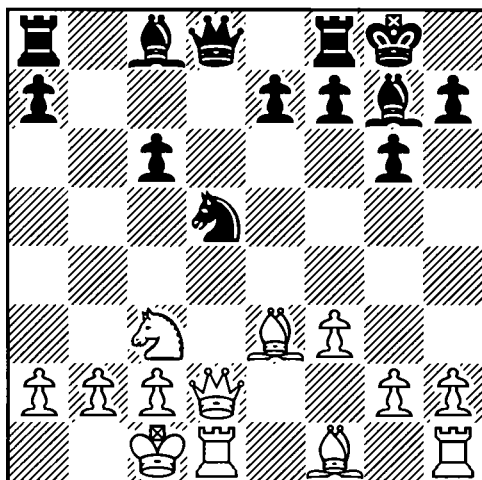


Diagram 1 (W)

10 exd5 has always been the main line. The alternatives are covered in the next two chapters.

Black has freed his position in the centre by offering a pawn sacrifice. In Game 27 we see the critical pawn grab 12 Nxd5 cxd5 13 Qxd5. This line used to be played very rarely, but nowadays white players, armed with computers, are sometimes tempted to grab the pawn. Modern technology has also helped strengthen defensive resources and it seems that the pawn sacrifice is as sound as ever. While few players will make this line a regular part of their white repertoire, it has seen some success when used as a surprise weapon.

The remaining games in the chapter see the positional continuation 12 Bd4. Game 28 examines the traditional 12...e5. Historically this has been by far the most popular move, as Black both avoids the exchange of bishops and gains time. Nowadays this method of play is looking a bit suspicious, as Black has trouble generating enough activity to compensate for his positional woes. Still, this line will always have its supporters as it is Black's most complicated choice.

In recent years Black has preferred a couple of simplifying approaches. Game 29 takes a look at 12...Bxd4. It seems counterintuitive to exchange bishops like this, but after 13 Qxd4 Qb6 (13...Qc7 is also covered) Black hopes to develop quickly and easily. Defects in Black's structure remain, but these need not be fatal if Black is careful.

Black can also elect to exchange two sets of minor pieces with 12...Nxc3 13 Qxc3 Bh6+ 14 Be3 Bxe3+ 15 Qxe3, which is covered in Games 30 and 31. To justify his play, Black must offer a pawn with 15...Qb6. In this line the play is fairly straightforward. While flank attacks for either side are not uncommon, Black must always be wary of getting into situations where he will suffer because of his split queen-side pawns.

*Game 27*  
**T.Luther-R.Polzin**  
**Austrian League 2009**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Nxd5 cxd5 13 Qxd5**

White is committed. Instead 13 Bh6 Bxh6! 14 Qxh6 Qa5 has long been known to be satisfactory for Black.

**13...Qc7! (Diagram 2) 14 Qc5**

White can also grab the rook, but after 14 Qxa8?! Bf5 15 Qxf8+ Kxf8 16 Rd2 (16 Bd3? Qe5) 16...h5! Black has scored tremendously. A recent example went 17 Be2 Bf6!? (Black has also done well with the more common 17...Kg8 and 17...Qb8) 18

g3?! (18 Rhd1 is a better try) 18...Qb7! 19 c4 Qa6 (even stronger is 19...Qb4! with the idea 20...Bxb2+! 21 Rxb2 Qc3; if 20 Bd4 Bxd4 21 Rxd4 Qa4! threatens mate as well as the a2-pawn) 20 a3 Qa4 21 g4 hxg4 22 fxg4 Bxg4! 23 Bxg4 Qxc4+ 24 Rc2 Qxg4 25 Bxa7? Qd7! 26 Bc5 Bxb2+! 27 Rxb2 (27 Kxb2 Qb7+) 27...Qc6 and Black was winning in E.Kislik-S.Husari, Budapest 2010.

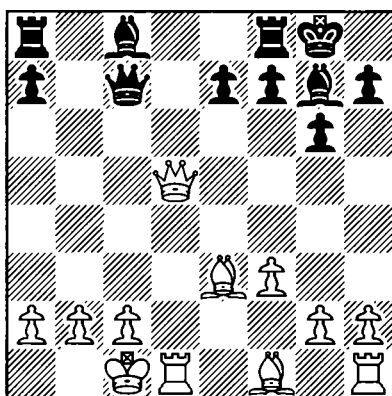


Diagram 2 (W)

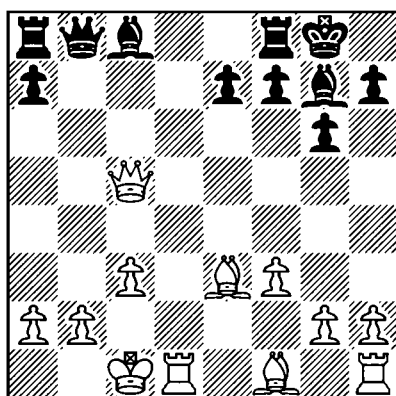


Diagram 3 (B)

### 14...Qb7

The alternative 14...Qb8 is much less common. Black has done well with this move, but it is probably inferior. White has:

a) 15 Bd4 Qf4+ (after 15...Bf5 16 Ba6 Qf4+ White must avoid 17 Kb1? Rfc8! and instead play 17 Be3 Qa4 18 Qc4 Bxc2 19 Qxa4 Bxa4 20 b3 with a slightly better ending) 16 Be3 (not 16 Kb1? Rd8) 16...Qb8 repeats moves.

b) 15 Qa3 Be6 16 Ba6 Qe5 17 g3 Rad8 18 Bf4 Qf6 19 Rhe1 Bf5 20 Rxd8 Rxd8 21 c3? (after 21 Bc4 Qd4 22 Bb3 Dearing suggests 22...Rd7 with the idea of ...Qf2) 21...Qb6! 22 Be3 Bh6! 23 f4 (if 23 Bxh6 Qf2) 23...Qc6 24 Bd2 Qd5 (24...Rd6! with the idea 25 Bf1 Qd5! is even stronger) 25 Re2 e5 26 Qa4 exf4 27 gxf4? (White had to play 27 Re8+ Rxe8 28 Qxe8+ Bf8 29 Bxf4 Qxa2, although Black is clearly better) 27...Bxf4! 28 Re8+ (or 28 Bxf4 Qh1+ 28 Qxf4 Qxa2) 28...Kg7 29 Qxf4 Rxe8 30 Bc4 Qh1+ 31 Bf1 Kg8 0-1 M.Adams-A.Fedorov, Wijk aan Zee 2001.

c) 15 b3 Bf5 16 Bd3 Rc8 17 Qa5 Rc3! 18 Bxf5 Rxe3 19 Be4 Qf4 and now:

c1) 20 Bxa8? Rd3+! (but not 20...Rxb3+ 21 Rd2 Rb8 22 Bd5 when White was winning in V.Ivanchuk-J.Hodgson, Amsterdam 1996) 21 Kb1 Qd4 22 c3? (White has to play 22 Qd8+! Qxd8 23 Rxd3 Qxa8 24 Rhd1 Bf8 25 Rd8 Qb7 26 Re8 Qb6 27 Rdd8

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Qg1+ 28 Kb2 Qxg2 29 Rxf8+ Kg7, although Black is still better) 22...Rxd1+ 23 Rxd1 Qxd1+ 24 Kb2 Qd2+ 25 Ka3 Bxc3 and Black was winning in G.Valenti-V.Rajlich, Budapest 2001.

c2) 20 g3 Qf6 21 Rd8+ Rxd8 22 Qxd8+ Bf8 23 Kb1 Qc3 and now both 24 g4 Re2 and 24 a4 f5 are mentioned by Dearing. In both cases Black has sufficient counterplay.

c3) 20 Kb1 Rf8!? (bad is 20...Bc3? 21 Qc5 with the ideas Bxa8 and g3, but 20...Qf6 21 Rd8+ Rxd8 22 Qxd8+ Bf8 has been played a couple of times) 21 Rd8 Bc3 22 Rxf8+ Kxf8 looks at least okay for Black after 23 Qd8+ Kg7 24 Qxe7 Re2 or 23 Qxa7 Re2 with ideas like ...Bf6, ...Qe5, or ...Qxh2.

d) 15 c3!? (Diagram 3).



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This obvious move has been seen only rarely in tournament practice, but it has scored very well for White in correspondence play. 14...Qb8 has scored very well overall for Black, but the tables turn when White goes for 15 c3.

After 15...Be6 16 Qa5! (much stronger than 16 Qa3? Qe5 when Black has strong counterplay: for example, 17 Bd4 Qf4+ 18 Kb1 Rfd8) 16...Be5 (both 16...Rc8 and 16...Qb7 are well met by 17 Ba6) 17 g3 (or 17 h4!? Bf4 18 Bxf4 Qxf4+ 19 Kb1) 17...Bc7 18 Qa6 looks promising for White: for example, 18...Bb6 (or 18...Rd8 19 Rxd8+ Qxd8 20 Bc4) 19 Bf4 Bc7 20 Bg5!?.

Returning to 14...Qb7 (Diagram 4):

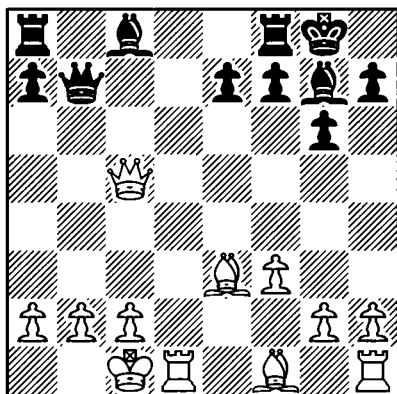


Diagram 4 (W)

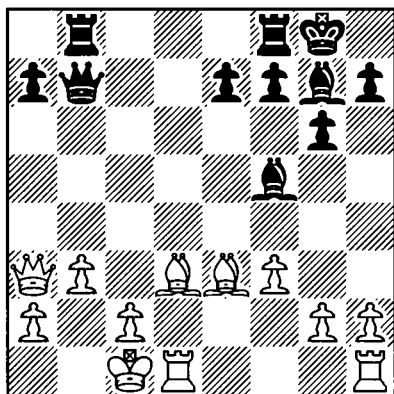


Diagram 5 (B)

**15 Qa3**

Instead 15 Bd4 is well met by 15...Bf5 intending ...Rfc8, while 15 Qb5 Qxb5 16 Bxb5 Rb8 is certainly okay for Black. 15 c3 Bf5 16 Qa3!? has been topical in some correspondence games. Black seems to have plenty of ideas, such as 16...Rab8 17 Ba6 Qc6 18 Bd3 Qd5 19 Bc2 (or 19 Bxf5 Qxf5 20 Rhf1 Rfc8 with good compensation) and here both 19...Qb5 and 19...Qe5!? are possible.

White main alternative is 15 b3 Bf5 16 Bd3 and then:

a) 16...Rfc8?! 17 Qa5 Qc6 (17...Rc3 does not work because 18 Bxf5 Rxe3 19 Be4 wins the exchange) 18 Bxf5 gxf5 19 c4! is known to favour White. A recent game between two of the world's best young players confirmed this assessment: 19...Qe6 20 Rhe1! Rab8 21 Bf4 Qf6 22 Be5 Bh6+ 23 Kb1 Qb6 24 Qxb6 Rxb6 25 Rd7 Rxc4 26 Bd4 Rbb4 27 Bb2 1-0 W.So-R.Robson, Lubbock 2010.

b) 16...Rac8! and now:

b1) 17 Qxa7 Bxd3 18 Qxb7 (a draw also arises after 18 Rxd3 Qc6 19 c4 Qf6 when White must avoid 20 Bd4? Qg5+ and instead play 20 Qd4 Qa6 21 Qa7 Qf6 with a repetition) 18...Rxc2+ 19 Kb1 Rb2+ with a perpetual check.

b2) 17 Qa5 Rc3! 18 Bxf5 Rxe3 19 Be4 Qb8 20 g3 Qc8 is a typical position where Black has good compensation for a pawn because of his active pieces and the weaknesses around White's king. This line has been debated a bit in correspondence games in recent years, but Black is still holding his own.

**15...Bf5 16 Bd3**

Instead 16 c3 transposes to 15 c3 above, while other moves should not trouble Black:

a) 16 Bc4 Rfc8 17 Bb3 a5! gives Black good play.

b) 16 Kb1? Rab8 gives Black a winning position after 17 Bc1 Bxc2+! 18 Kxc2 Rfc8+ 19 Kb1 Rxc1+! or 17 b3 Rfc8 18 Bd3 Qc6!.

c) 16 Ba6 Qc7 17 Qc5 Qb6! 18 Qxb6 axb6 19 Bc4 (19 Bd3 Bxd3 20 Rxd3 Rxa2 is good for Black) 19...Rfc8 20 Bb3 Rxa2! 21 Rd8+ Rxd8 22 Bxa2 h5! and Black is at least equal.

**16...Rab8 17 b3 (Diagram 5)**

Not 17 c3? Bxc3! 18 bxc3 (or 18 Qxc3 Rfc8) 18...Bxd3.

**17...Qc6!**

Other moves look worse:

a) 17...Rbc8 18 Bxf5 gxf5 19 Rd3 Qc6 20 c4 Qf6 21 Rhd1! saw White consolidating in V.Ivanchuk-A.Fedorov, Polanica Zdroj 2000.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

b) 17...Rfc8 18 Bxf5 gxf5 19 Rd3 Qc6 (Black was also struggling after 19...Qc7 20 c4 in S.Movsesian-A.Fedorov, Polanica Zdroj 2000) 20 c4 Qg6 (or 20...Qf6 21 Rhd1!) 21 Rhd1! Qxg2 22 Kb1! (instead 22 Bd4 Bxd4 23 Rxd4 Qxf3 24 Qb2 Qe3+ 25 Kb1 e5 was unclear in G.Pinter-D.Kanovsky, Balatonlelle 2001) 22...h6 (22...Kh8 was seen in M.Vachier Lagrave-R.Mamedov, Heraklion 2004, and here 23 R1d2! Qh1+ 24 Qc1 Qxc1+ 25 Kxc1 would give White control of the d-file and a clear advantage) 23 Rg1 Qe2 24 Rc3! Rd8 25 Qc1 Kh7 26 Qc2 Qxc2+ 27 Rxc2 when White's queenside majority gives him some advantage in the ending.

### 18 Bxf5 (Diagram 6)

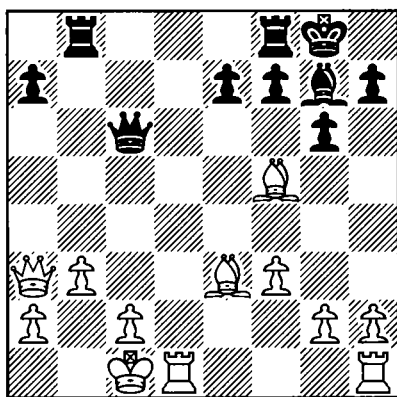


Diagram 6 (B)

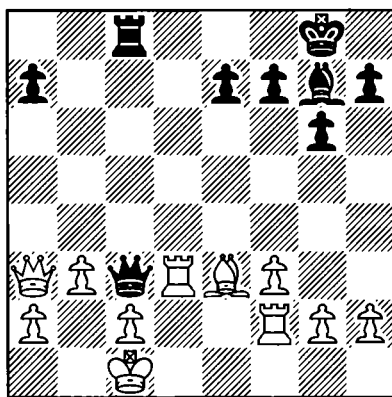


Diagram 7 (B)

White must tread carefully, but there are some sensible alternatives:

- a) 18 Qxe7? is not one of them: 18...Qc3 gives Black a decisive attack.
- b) 18 c4 Qf6 is given as clearly better for Black by Dearing. After 19 Bxf5 Qc3+ 20 Kb1 Qxe3 it is certainly not over yet, but Black clearly has more than enough for the pawn.
- c) 18 Bc4 Qf6 19 Kd2!? (White must avoid 19 Bd4? Qg5+ and 19 Rd4 Bh6!) 19...Bxc2 20 Rc1 Bf5 21 Ke2 looks funny, but the position is probably about equal.
- d) 18 Qa5 Qf6 (18...Rfc8 is also possible) 19 Bxf5 Qb2+ 20 Kd2 gxf5 21 Ke2 is another funny try which has been seen in some correspondence games: 21...Rfc8 (21...Rbc8 is similar, but not 21...Qxc2+? 22 Rd2 when White will safely grab the a7-pawn) 22 Rc1 Rxc2+ 23 Rxc2 Qxc2+ 24 Qd2 Qc7 25 Bf4 e5 is level and, for example, 26 Rc1 Qb7 (or 26...Qe7 with the idea ...Rd8) 27 Be3 f4 28 Bf2 e4 29 fxe4 Qxe4+ 30 Kf1 f3 saw Black hold the balance in M.Florea-P.Walczak, correspondence 2009.

After the text, 18...gxf5?! would allow White to obtain the advantage with either 19 Qc5 or 19 Bd4. Black does not have to recapture however.

**18...Qc3!!**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This is an absolutely wonderful move discovered by Golubev. Black has given up a piece, but his attack is very strong and White must already be very careful just to survive.

### 19 Bd3?

This is a known mistake. White must play 19 Qc5 Qb2+ 20 Kd2 gxf5 21 Ke2 (worse is 21 Qxf5 e6 22 Qe4 f5 23 Qxe6+ Kh8 when Black's attack is very strong) and now Black has a couple of tries:

- a) 21...Rfc8 22 Qxf5 Rxc2+ 23 Rd2 Rxd2+ 24 Bxd2 Qxa2 25 Rc1 Qa6+ 26 Rc4 Rd8 27 Be3 e6 28 Qc2 Qd6 29 Rc8 Qa6+ 1/2-1/2 was F.Handke-R.Polzin, German League 2001.
- b) 21...Rbc8 is a better attempt to get something from the position, but White should still hold: 22 Qxf5 e6!? (instead 22...Rxc2+ 23 Rd2 Rxd2+ 24 Bxd2 Qxa2 25 Qd3 Qb2 26 f4 Rc8 was agreed drawn in B.Baroin-J.Simmelink, correspondence 2004) 23 Qd3 Rc3! (23...Rxc2+ 24 Rd2 is level) 24 Qd7 Rxc2+ 25 Rd2 Qxa2 26 Qd3 Rxd2+ 27 Bxd2 Rc8 (Black could try 27...Qb2!?) 28 Rc1 1/2-1/2 G.Morais-G.Walter, correspondence 2009.

Holding White's position together may not be so difficult in correspondence play, but over the board it may not be so simple to defend.

### 19...Rbc8

Black intends ...Rfd8xd3 and mate on c2.

### 20 Rhf1

With this move the rook can defend along the second rank. Black's attack is still very strong, but White is struggling in any case:

- a) 20 Bf2 (White wants to chase the black queen, but this is too slow) 20...Rfd8 21 Be1 Qa1+ 22 Kd2 Rxd3+! 23 cxd3 Bh6+ with a crushing attack.
- b) 20 Qa6 Rfd8 leaves White hard-pressed to defend against 21...Qb2+ 22 Kd2 Qxc2+!
- c) 20 Qa4 Rfd8 21 b4 is relatively best, but after 21...Rxd3 22 Rxd3 Qa1+ 23 Kd2 Qxh1 24 Qxa7 Qxg2+ 25 Bf2 e5 Black's initiative shows no signs of letting up.

### 20...Rfd8 21 Rf2 Rxd3!

21...Qa1+ 22 Kd2 Rxc2+ 23 Kxc2 Qc3+ 24 Kb1 Qa1+ is only a draw, but both 21...Rc6

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

with the idea of ...Rcd6 and Ward's suggestion 21...Rd5 are strong as well.

### 22 Rxd3 (Diagram 7) 22...Qe1+?

After this Black only has a draw. Instead 22...Qxd3 threatening ...Qc3 gives Black a winning attack. For example:

a) 23 Qxa7 Qc3 (threatening ...Qe1+) 24 Kd1 Qa1+ 25 Ke2 (or 25 Kd2 Rd8+) 25...Rxc2+ 26 Bd2 Bc3 27 Kd3 Qd1 wins for Black.

b) 23 Qxe7 Qc3 (or even 23...Bf8) 24 Kd1 (Black also wins after 24 Re2 Qa1+ 25 Kd2 Bf6! with the idea of ...Rd8) 24...Bf8! 25 Qe4 Bc5! 26 Bxc5 (26 Re2 Qa1+ wins after 27 Kd2 Rd8+ or 27 Bc1 Ba3) 26...Rd8+ wins lots of material.

23 Rd1 Qxe3+ 24 Rfd2 Rxc2+ 25 Kxc2 Qc3+ 26 Kb1 Qa1+ 27 Kc2 Qc3+ 28 Kb1 Qa1+ 29 Kc2 1/2-1/2

## Game 28

**L.Nisipeanu-S.Azarov**

Romanian Team Championship 2008

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4 (Diagram 8)

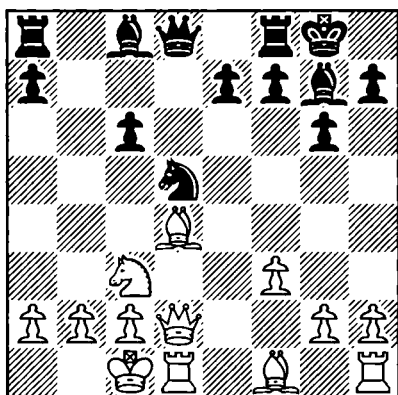


Diagram 8 (B)

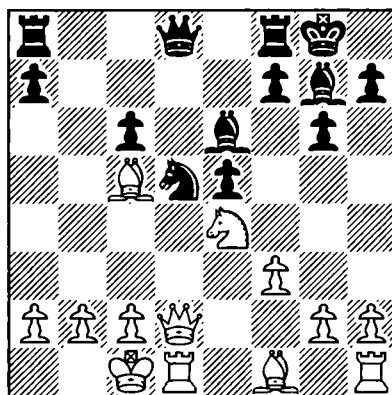


Diagram 9 (B)

This positional continuation is rightfully the main line.

### 12...e5

This has always been the main continuation, but it has fallen on hard times. Black



gains time and keeps the dark-squared bishops on the board, but White's long-term positional advantages often come back to haunt Black. White has a better pawn structure and control of certain key squares like c5 and d6, but the subtle weakness of Black's a-pawn often proves to be his undoing. Modern (computer) analysis has strengthened White's resources rather than Black's in this line. Despite these issues, 12...e5 has maintained some attraction because it at least leads to a complicated fight.

### 13 Bc5 Be6

Black correctly offers the exchange. 13...Re8 is playable, but there is really no advantage to this move order. After 14 Nxd5 cxd5 15 Qxd5 (15 Bb5 Be6! is a sound exchange sacrifice) 15...Qxd5 16 Rxd5 Be6 17 Rd6 Bxa2 Black should hold the ending (still a rather tedious task), so White usually prefers 14 Ne4. Here 14...Be6 transposes to the game and is almost certainly best, while 14...f5?! 15 Nd6 Bf8 16 Bb5! Bd7 17 Ba4! is known to favour White. The only real independent alternative is 14...Qc7, after which 15 h4 Rd8 16 h5 f5 17 hxg6 fxe4 (17...hxg6? 18 Ng5 with Bc4 coming is just losing for Black) 18 fxe4 Be6 19 exd5 cxd5 20 gxh7+! (after 20 Ba3 hxg6 21 g4 e4 Black had counterplay in A.Shirov-M.Golubev, German League 2002) 20...Kh8 21 Be3 Bf5 22 Bb5!? (Golubev mentioned 22 Bh6 Rac8 with some compensation) 22...Rab8 23 Ba4 Rdc8 24 Rdf1 Qc4 25 Bh6! Rb7 26 Bxg7+ Rxd7 27 Rxf5? (White is winning after 27 Bb3 Qe4 28 Rf2) 27...Qxa4? (27...Qxa2! should hold) 28 Qc3! Qe8 29 Rxe5 was crushing in A.Cabrera-A.Gomez Rebollo, Burguillos 2009.

### 14 Ne4 (Diagram 9)

After 14 Bxf8 Qxf8 Black threatens ...Bh6. Black has more than enough compensation after 15 Kb1 Rb8 or 15 Nxd5 cxd5 16 Qa5 Rb8.

### 14...Re8

Yurtaev's 14...Rb8 was popular for a while, but it is now known that 15 Bc4! Re8 16 h4 h6 17 g4 favours White. The position is similar to the main line, but Black has played ...Rb8 a bit prematurely.

### 15 h4 (Diagram 10)

Instead 15 c4 Qc7! is a typical resource, while 15 g4 Nf4 16 Qc3? runs into 16...Bh6! when White cannot avoid material loss. White can play the immediate 15 Bc4, however. Here 15...f5 16 Ng5 Bh6 is note 'c' to Black's 15th move, below, while 15...Qc7 16 g4 h6 17 g5 h5 18 h4 transposes to the main line. Black does have a couple of independent tries:

a) 15...h6 16 g4 Qh4?! (16...Qc7 17 h4 will be seen in the notes to White's 17th, be-

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

low) 17 Bf2 Qe7 18 Bc5 Qh4 19 Bf2 Qe7 20 h4! f5? 21 gxf5 gxf5 22 Bc5 Qc7 23 Rhg1 Kh7 24 Rxg7+! Qxg7 25 Rg1 Qf7 26 Nd6 Qc7 27 Nxe8 Rxe8 28 h5 gave White a big advantage in M.Mulyar-S.Kudrin, Seattle 2002.

b) 15...a5!? 16 g4 (the thematic 16 a4 is also possible) 16...a4!? 17 h4 h6 18 g5 h5 19 a3 Qc7 20 Qf2 Red8 21 Rd2 Rd7 22 Rhd1 Rad8 (22...Rb8!?) with unclear play in S.Erenburg-B.Smith, Philadelphia 2008. If 23 Bxd5 cxd5 24 Bb6 Qc4 25 Bxd8 Qa2 gives Black counterplay.

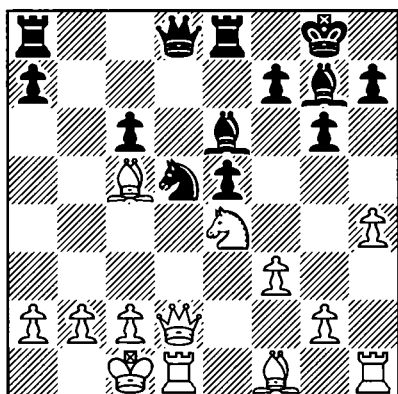


Diagram 10 (B)

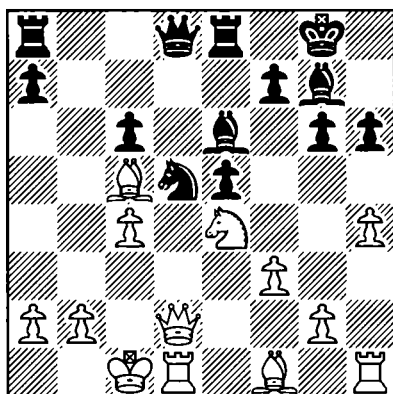


Diagram 11 (B)

### 15...h6

This is by far the commonest, but Black still has a lot of problems to solve. The alternatives do not have the best of reputations, but Black has to find some improvements somewhere:

a) 15...Qc7 allows White to open the h-file with 16 h5. After 16...Rad8 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 g3 (18 g4!?) 18...Bf5 19 Bd3 (19 Qh2 looks even better) White had a large advantage in S.Ganguly-J.Deepen Chakkravarthy, Chennai 2008.

b) 15...h5 used to be favoured by Golubev. Black prevents the march of the h-pawn, but ...f5 would forever concede the g5-square. Considering that in the main line Black cannot play ...f5, this does not seem like such a concession. Still, the end-game that arises after 16 Bc4 Nf4 17 Qxd8 (White can also play the middlegame with 17 Bxe6 Nxe6 18 Qc3) 17...Rexd8 18 Bxe6 Nxe6 19 Be7! is pleasant for White.

c) 15...f5 is supposed to be bad after 16 Ng5 Bh6 17 Bc4. Here Black could consider 17...Bxg5 (the more common 17...Qf6 has scored horribly for Black after 18 Kb1) 18 hxg5 f4! 19 Rh6 Rb8! (worse is 19...Qxg5?! 20 Rdh1 Nf6 21 Bxe6+ Rxe6 22 Rxh7!

with the idea 22...Nxb7 23 Qd7! 20 Bxa7 (or 20 Rdh1 Rb7) 20...Rb7 21 Bc5 Qxg5 which is somewhat unclear at least.

d) 15...Nf4 was Tiviakov's favourite move for awhile. The simplest response is 16 g3 (16 Qc3? runs into the trick 16...Bh6!, but playing the middlegame with 16 Qe1 is also promising) 16...Qxd2+ 17 Rxd2 Nh5 18 g4 Nf4 (instead 18...Nf6 19 Bd3 Nd7 20 Be3 Nb6 21 h5 saw White keep up the pressure in A.Shirov-R.Polzin, German League 2006) 19 Ba6 Bd5 20 c4 Bxe4 21 fxe4 Ne6 22 Be3 (or 22 Bd6 Rad8 23 Bb7 Nd4 24 Bc5 Ne6 25 Bd6 Nd4 26 Bc7 and White won material in M.Perunovic-D.Solak, Vrsac 2007) 22...Rad8 23 c5 Rxd2 24 Kxd2 Rb8 25 Kc3 Nd4 26 Rf1 Kf8 27 b4 gave White a nice edge in M.Adams-M.Al Modiahki, Gibraltar 2007 although Black did manage to hold.

### 16 g4

This advance is almost always played. White discourages ...f5 and maintains the option of advancing with either h5 or g5. Instead 16 Bc4 f5! 17 Nd6 Re7 is known to give Black good play, but White does have a couple of dangerous alternatives: a) 16 c4!? (Diagram 11).



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This move is not new in itself, but it is more dangerous than was previously believed. White has multiple promising continuations against 12...e5, which is why many Dragon players have switched to the alternatives.

Black has:

a1) 16...Nf4 17 Qc3 Qc7 18 g3! Nh5 19 g4 Nf4 20 Bd6 and Black has problems with the e5-pawn.

a2) 16...Qc7 17 h5 g5 18 Nxb5! is a dangerous sacrifice given by Gawain Jones. After 18...hxb5 19 Qxb5 f6 20 Qg3 Kh8 21 h6 Bf8 22 Bxf8 Rxf8 23 cxd5 cxd5+ 24 Kb1 the position is not completely clear, but White has to be better.

a3) 16...Nb6 17 Qc2 (also 17 Qa5 and 17 Qc3 look good) 17...Qc7 18 Bd6 Qc8 19 g4 Rd8 20 h5 f5? (this is bad, but Black's position was not looking too good anyway) 21 gxf5 gxf5 22 Rg1! Rxd6 (22...fxe4 23 Bxe5) 23 Nxd6 Qf8 24 Bh3 1-0 T.Kosintseva-T.Kantans, Gibraltar 2011.

b) 16 h5 is also uncommon, even though Black does not have an easy time following 16...g5 17 c4!? (after 17 g4 Black could consider 17...Nf4, while 17...Qc7 is not 'a' to White's 17th in the main game) and now:

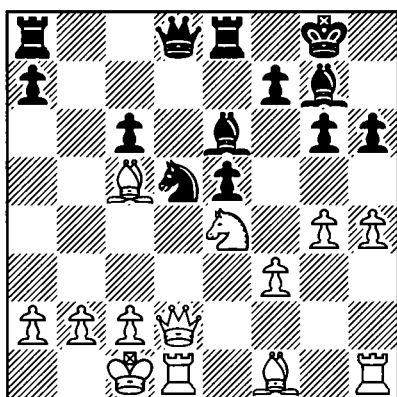
b1) 17...Nb6 18 Qc3 Nd7 19 g4 looks good for White.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

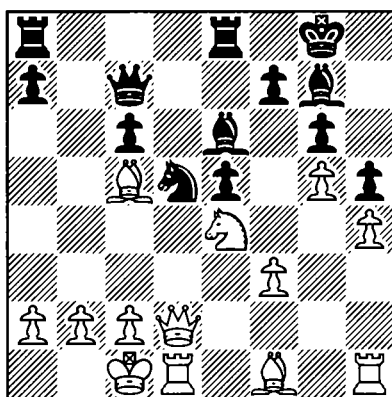
b2) 17...Qc7 18 Kb1 (18 Nxc5! is variation 'a2' above) 18...Red8 19 Bd6 Rxd6 20 Nxd6 Qxd6 21 cxd5 cxd5 22 Bc4 Rb8 23 Bxd5 Rd8 24 Bxe6 Qxd2 25 Rxd2 Rxd2 26 Bb3 e4 27 fxe4 Rxb2+ (it is even better to save this with 27...Rxc2! 28 Rf1 g4 when 29 Rxf7? Rxb2+ 30 Kc1 Rxb3 wins for Black and 29 Bxf7+ Kh8 intending ...Rxb2+ and ...g3 looks very strong) 28 Kc1 Rf2 (now 28...Rxc2 29 Rf1 g4 30 Rxf7 gives White enough to hold the balance) left Black only a little better in N.Huschenbeth-I.Chirila, Pardubice 2009.

b3) 17...Nf6 is solid, but after 18 Qe1 Qc7 19 Bd6 Qb6 20 Bxe5 Nxe4 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Qxe4 Rab8 23 Qc2 (instead 23 Qd4+ Qxd4 24 Rxd4 Bf5 gives Black good compensation) 23...Rbd8 24 Qc3+ f6 25 Bd3 Bf7 26 Bc2 Qf2 27 Rxd8 Rxd8 28 g4 Re8 29 Qd3 Qe3+ 30 Qxe3 Rxe3 31 Be4 Bxc4 32 b3 Bb5 33 Rd1 White maintained some pressure in the endgame in H.Rada-G.Everitt, correspondence 2008.

Returning to 16 g4 (**Diagram 12**):



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (W)**

### 16...Qc7

Black connects his rooks. Other moves do not impress:

a) 16...f5? 17 gxf5 gxf5 18 Nd6 Rf8 19 Nb7 (19 Nc4 Re8 20 Rg1 is also strong) 19...Qf6 20 Bxf8 Bxf8 21 Rg1+ Kh7 22 c4 was winning for White in R.Prasanna Raghuram-A.Karpatchev, Calvi 2010.

b) 16...a5 17 g5 h5 18 a4 Qc7 19 Bc4 Red8 20 Qf2 is Almasi-Watson in the notes to Black's 19th move, below.

c) 16...Rb8 looks useful, but as mentioned before, after 17 g5 h5 18 Bc4 Black's rook

is not very threatening and the a7-pawn is weak.

d) 16...Nf4 17 Qc3! Bd5 18 g5 h5 and now both 19 Qa3 and 19 Rh2, intending Rhd2, give White a nice advantage.

### 17 g5

This move fixes the kingside structure. This may seem counterintuitive at first, but White stands firm on the queenside and has a grip on the centre. With the g7-bishop and Black's kingside pawn majority contained, White can go to work on Black's weaknesses across the board. Instead 17 Bd6 Qb6 18 Bc5 just repeats the position (Black would be hard-pressed to avoid this, not that he should want to!), while 17 Bc4 is not well timed, because 17...Red8 18 Qf2 just gives Black more options. Even 18...f5!? as well as 18...Nf4 is possible. The main alternative is 17 h5 and here:

a) 17...g5 18 Bc4 (instead 18 Rh2 Red8 19 Qe1 Nf4 20 Rhd2 Rxd2 21 Qxd2 Bd5 has been seen a few times and looks satisfactory for Black) 18...Red8 19 Qf2 Nf4 20 Bxe6 Nxe6 21 Bd6 Qa5 (Black was also suffering after 21...Qb6 22 Rd2 Rd7 23 c3 Rad8 24 Rhd1 Qxf2 25 Rxf2 in J.Friedel-C.Koepke, Bad Wiessee 2009) 22 Kb1 Rd7 23 Rd2 Rad8 24 Rhd1 and White had a pleasant advantage in S.Vokarev-S.Azarov, Kazan 2008.

b) 17...f5!? was suggested by Dearing and this certainly looks like a better try: 18 gxf5 gxf5 19 Nd6 Red8 20 Rg1 (Black has good compensation for the exchange after 20 c4 Rxd6 21 Bxd6 Qxd6 22 cxd5 cxd5) 20...Kh7 21 Qe1 Rab8 22 Bd3 (safer is 22 Bc4 with an unclear position) 22...e4 23 c3 was I.Naumkin-R.Dautov, Jurmala 1982. Now 23...Rxb2! 24 fxe4 (no better is 24 Rxg7+ Qxg7 25 Kxb2 exd3) 24...Nxc3 25 Kxb2 Nxd1+ gives rise to complications which do not look unfavourable for Black.

### 17...h5 (Diagram 13) 18 Bc4

This is the most logical. Others:

a) 18 c4?! Rad8 (or 18...Red8) 19 Rh2 Ne7 20 Bd6 Qb7 21 Qc3 Nf5 22 Rhd2 Nxh4 gave Black trumps of his own in P.Mateka-A.Ljubicic, correspondence 2008.

b) 18 Bd6 Qb6 19 c4 (19 Bc5 Qc7 repeats) can be met by 19...Rad8 or 19...a5!? (Dearing).

c) 18 Qe1 Red8 19 Rh2!? is not a bad idea. After 19...Rd7 20 Rhd2 Qa5 (20...Rad8 looks better) 21 Rd3 Qxe1 22 Rxe1 Bf5 23 Red1 White was a little better in I.Sipos-E.Anka, Hungarian League 2010.

### 18...Red8

The rook does little on the e-file, so it makes sense to bring it to the d-file. Black has also tried 18...Rad8, but this leaves the a7-pawn weak. After 19 Qf2 Rd7 there

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

are a couple of recent examples that show what White is aiming for:

a) 20 Rd3 Bf5 (20...a5!?) 21 Rhd1 Red8 22 Bb3 Qb7 23 R3d2 a5 24 a4 Be6 25 Ba3! Nf4 26 Nc5 Rxd2 27 Rxd2 Rxd2 28 Qxd2 Qa7 29 Bxe6 Nxe6 30 Qd7! was good for White in S.Rublevsky-F.Corrales Jimenez, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010.

b) 20 Rd2 Red8 21 Rhd1 Nf4 22 Bxe6 Nxe6 23 Rxd7 Rxd7 24 Rxd7 Qxd7 25 Bxa7 left White up a good pawn in T.Petrosian-V.Antonio, Dubai 2010.

### 19 Qf2 (Diagram 14)

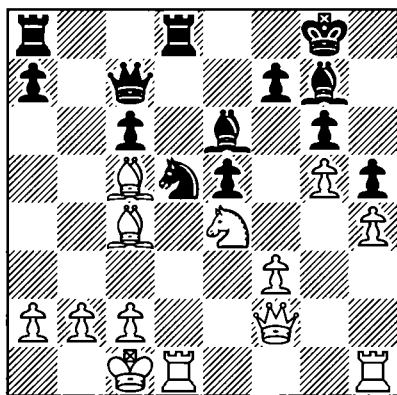


Diagram 14 (B)

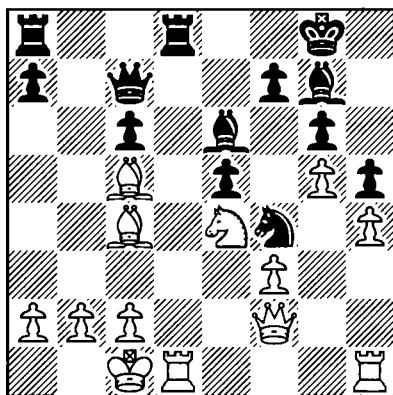


Diagram 15 (W)

### 19...Nf4

This is the most direct. There are two big alternatives, but it just seems that Black is always suffering:

a) 19...a5 should be met with 20 a4! Qb7 (after 20...Rab8 21 b3 intending to double rooks on the d-file is good for White) and now there are a couple of classic examples:

a1) 21 b3 Nf4 22 Bxe6 Nxe6 23 Rxd8+ Rxd8 24 Bb6 Ra8 (a better try is 24...Rd5 25 Nc3 Rd7 26 Bxa5 c5 27 Ne4 c4 when Black had counterplay in J.Nielsen-H.Engl, correspondence 1999) 25 Rd1 Nd4 26 Bc5 Qd7 27 Nf6+ Bxf6 28 gxf6 Qd5 29 Bxd4 exd4 30 Qxd4 Qxf3 31 Qe5! Qf2 32 Rd7 Rf8 33 Kb2 c5 34 Rxf7 1-0 Z.Almasi-W.Watson, German League 1995.

a2) 21 Rhe1 Rab8 22 b3 Nf4 23 Bxe6 Nxe6 24 Nf6+ (24 Bd6 Rbc8 25 Qg3 also looks good) 24...Bxf6 25 gxf6 Rd5 (25...Nxc5 26 Qxc5 is miserable for Black as well) 26 Bd6 and White was clearly better in J.Ehlvest-M.Marin, Calcutta 1997.

In these examples it is clear that Black has the worse pawn structure and White can decide when to exchange minor pieces.

b) 19...Qb7 was Black's big hope for a while. He stays flexible and hopes to create counterplay with his queen, but the position remains unpleasant. White has:

b1) 20 Rd2 a5 21 a4 Nf4 22 Bxe6 Nxe6 23 Bd6 (23 Rhd1 Rd5!) 23...Nd4 24 Rhd1 Rxd6! (Black initiates a clever combination to equalize) 25 Nxd6 Qb4 26 Ne4 Rb8! 27 c3 (not 27 b3 Qa3+ 28 Kb1 Nxb3 29 cxb3 Qxb3+) 27...Nb3+ 28 Kc2 Qxa4 29 Rd8+ Rxd8 30 Rxd8+ Kh7 31 Kb1 Qa1+ 32 Kc2 Qa4 33 Kb1 ½-½ M.Palac-A.Kolev, Skopje 2002.

b2) 20 Rhe1 Nf4 (20...a5 21 a4 is Ehlvest-Marin, above) 21 Bxe6 Nxe6 22 Bd6! (there is no point in 22 Rxd8+ Rxd8 23 Bxa7?! Ra8, while Black has counterplay after either 22 Nf6+ Bxf6 23 gxf6 Qa6! or 22 Kb1 Rd5! 23 c4 Rd7, as in F.Kahl-A.Isaev, correspondence 2009, because White has been enticed to loosen his king's position) 22...Rd7 (instead 22...Qb6 is the same as 21...Qb6 in the main game, but here White has not yet played Rhd1 – this would seem to favour Black, but it probably makes little difference as after 23 Rd2 Rd7 24 Red1 play transposes directly) 23 Nf6+!? (or 23 Rd2 Rad8 24 Red1 maintaining a plus) 23...Bxf6 24 gxf6 Rad8 25 Bxe5 Rxd1+ 26 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 27 Kxd1 Qb5 28 Qe2 Qd5+ 29 Kc1 Qxa2 30 b3 Qa3+ 31 Kb1 Qc5 32 f4 has been seen in a couple of correspondence games. Black should hold, but he will suffer for the half point.

Returning to 19...Nf4 (**Diagram 15**):

### 20 Bxe6

White continues with the same plan seen in variation 'b' above. Instead 20 Bb3 Bd5! helps Black, while grabbing the a-pawn is premature: 20 Rxd8+ Rxd8 21 Bxe6 Nxe6 22 Bxa7?! Ra8 23 Bb6 Qb7 24 a3? Rb8 and Black was winning in A.Tosoni-D.Vocaturro, Internet 2007.

### 20...Nxe6 21 Bd6!

White does not want to allow ...Rd5. This move clogs things up and gives White time to double his rooks on the d-file.

### 21...Qa5

The alternative 21...Qb6 is more common, even though endgames almost always favour White. After 22 Rd2 Rd7 23 Rhd1 Black has:

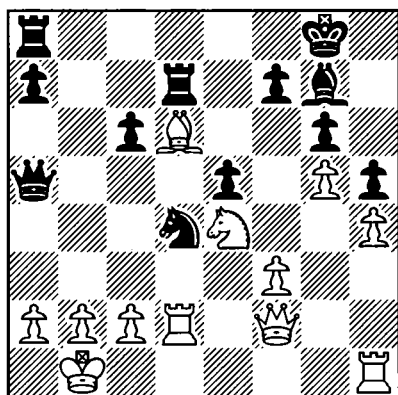
a) 23...Rad8 24 Qxb6! axb6 25 Be7! Rxd2 26 Rxd2 Ra8 (Black faces similar problems after 26...Rxd2 27 Kxd2 Nd4 28 a4! Nxf3+ 29 Kd3 Nxh4 30 Bd8 – Yakovich) 27 Rd6 Nd4 28 a4! was L.Psakhis-D.Komljenovic, Andorra 1994. The pawn is untouchable because of Rd8+ and 28...Nxf3 loses to the simple 29 Rd8+ Rxd8 30 Bxd8 when the

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

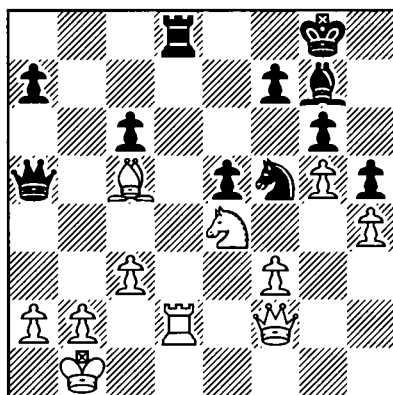
a-pawn is a runner.

b) 23...Qxf2 24 Rxf2 Rad8 25 Rfd2 (25 c3 allows the trick 25...f5! 26 gxf6 Bf8 27 Rfd2 Bh6 with an unclear position) 25...Nd4 (25...f5? 26 Nc5 Nxc5 27 Bxc5 gives White a winning endgame according to Yakovich) 26 f4 Nf3 27 Rd3 Nxh4 28 fxe5 may be a little better for White because he has more space, but Black's passed h-pawn gives him some hope.

**22 Kb1 Rd7 23 Rd2 Nd4 (Diagram 16)**



**Diagram 16 (W)**



**Diagram 17 (B)**

Black hurries with this move so the knight can get to the f5-square. Instead 23...Rad8 24 Rhd1 Nd4 transposes to 24 Rhd1, but as Yakovich points out White could avoid this with 24 c3! preventing the knight hop.

**24 c3!**

Azarov had already reached this position a couple of times and hadn't had any problems, but Nisipeanu was well prepared. Previously practice had seen 24 Rhd1 Rad8 25 Bc5 Rd5 26 Be7 (instead 26 c3 Rxc5 27 Nxc5 Qxc5 28 Qe3 Qd6 29 cxd4 exd4 30 Qd3 c5 gave Black sufficient play for the exchange in K.Maslak-S.Azarov, Moscow 2007) 26...R8d7 27 c4 Rxe7 28 cxd5 cxd5 when Black has enough play. For example:

a) 29 Nc3 Rb7 30 Rd3 Bf8 (not 30...Nxf3?? 31 Rxf3 e4 32 Rxd5 when White was winning in A.Rodriguez Cespedes-D.Komljenovic, Burriana 1990) 31 f4 Ba3 32 R1d2 Bb4 33 Qe3 Nb5 34 Nxd5 Bxd2 35 Qxd2 Qxd2 36 Rxd2 exf4 was level in S.Calleri-R.Amico, correspondence 2008.



b) 29 Nf6+ Bxf6 30 gxf6 Re6 31 Rxd4 (but not 31 f4? Rxf6, as in D.Hartl-M.Kanarek, Pardubice 2009, and 31 Qe3 Kh7 32 Rd3 Nf5 33 Qg5 d4 also favoured Black in J.Van Gool-A.Barata, correspondence 2008) 31...exd4 32 Qxd4 Qd8! 33 Qxa7 Qxf6 34 Qa8+ Kg7 35 Qxd5 Qxh4 and Black had the upper hand in A.Delchev-S.Azarov, Fuegen 2006.

#### **24...Nf5 25 Rhd1 Rad8 26 Bc5 Rxd2 27 Rxd2 (Diagram 17) 27...Nxh4?**

This is essentially a blunder, but the refutation was easy to miss. Instead Yakovich suggests 27...Rxd2 28 Qxd2 Nxh4 29 b3! Qc7 30 Qf2! Nf5 31 Bxa7 h4 32 Bb6 Qd7 33 Kc2 when White has a slight advantage, while Ward gives 27...Rd5 28 Bxa7 Nxh4 which looks just about sufficient for Black.

#### **28 b4! 1-0**

Black probably only considered 28 Rxd8+ Qxd8 29 Qxh4? Qd1 mate or 28 Qxh4 Rxd2 29 Nxd2 Qxc5, but after 28 b4! Rxd2 29 bxa5 Rxf2 30 Bxf2 Nxf3 31 Bxa7 White's passed a-pawn cannot be stopped. This is a familiar scenario and this game really underscores the problems Black can have with his inferior pawn structure and passive minor pieces, especially the once proud bishop on g7, which Black so deliberately avoided exchanging on move 12...

### *Game 29* **A.Volokitin-V.Jianu** Romanian Team Championship 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4 Bxd4**

This capture has become quite popular. It looks rather compliant to exchange bishops, but as we saw in the last game, it is often not Black's but White's dark-squared bishop which becomes very powerful.

#### **13 Qxd4 (Diagram 18) 13...Qb6**

This is the commonest move and is probably best, but 13...Qc7 (**Diagram 19**) avoids the exchange of queens and has also been frequently played.

White has two approaches:

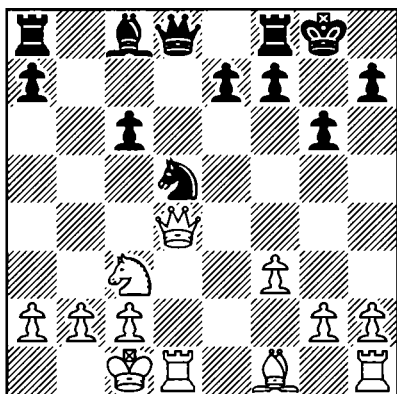
a) 14 Qc5 and then:

a1) With 14...Nxc3 Black further simplifies the position, but White's play is the easier after 15 Qxc3 Be6 and now:

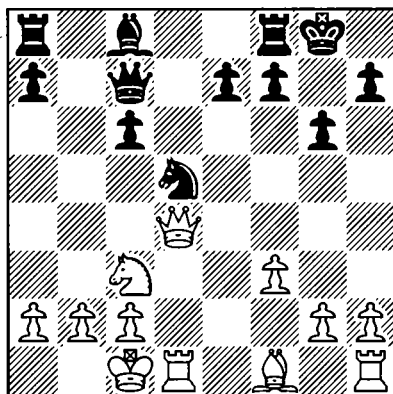
a11) 16 h4 Rfd8 17 Bd3 c5 18 h5 Qf4+ 19 Kb1 Qd4 20 hxg6 hxg6 21 Qa5 (Black was fine after 21 Qxd4 Rxd4 22 b3 Rad8 23 Kb2 Kg7 in Zhang Zhong-Bu Xiangzhi, Tia-

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yuan 2005) 21...Rab8 (not 21...Qb4? 22 Qc7 Rab8? 23 Qe5 1-0 S.Haslinger-S.Abu Sufian, Hastings 2007/8) 22 b3 Rd7 23 Rde1 Bd5 24 Be4 e6 (Black could try 24...Rbd8 25 Bxd5 Qxd5 26 Rd1 Qxd1+ 27 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 28 Kb2 c4!?) 25 Bxd5 exd5 26 Rd1 Qb4 27 Qa6 when White's safer king gave him the advantage in I.Balinov-Z.Velickovic, Vienna 1998.



**Diagram 18 (B)**



**Diagram 19 (W)**

a12) 16 Bd3 Rad8 (16...c5 17 h4 c4 18 Be4 Rad8 19 h5 g5 20 h6 f6 21 a3 was good for White in P.Svidler-A.Fedorov, Shenyang 2000) 17 Rde1!? c5 18 Kb1! Rd4 (if 18...Qf4 19 Qxc5) 19 h4 Qd6 20 h5 g5 21 h6 Rd8 22 b3 f6 23 g3 Bd5 24 Rhf1 e5 25 f4 and White was much better in A.Morozevich-K.Georgiev, Sarajevo 2000.

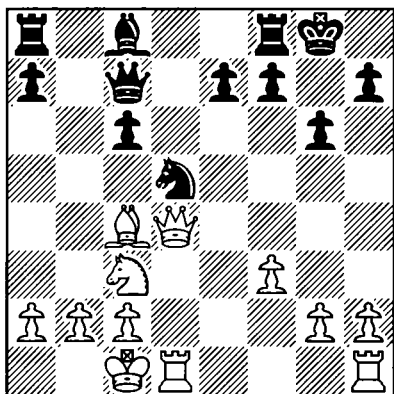
a2) 14...Qf4+!? 15 Kb1 Bf5 and now 16 Qxc6?? is not possible because of 16...Bxc2+, while Golubev's suggestion 16 Ne2!? remains untried. Practice has seen instead:

a21) 16 Bd3 was another suggestion by Golubev: 16...Nxc3+ (after 16...Ne3 17 g3 Qxf3 18 Be2 Bxc2+ 19 Kc1! Bxd1 20 Rxd1!? Qf2 21 Rf1 Qxh2 22 Qxe3 White has some initiative according to Golubev) 17 Qxc3 Bxd3 18 Rxd3 Rad8 19 Qxc6 Rxd3 20 cxd3 Rd8 21 Qe4 Qd2 22 Rc1 e6 23 Rc2 Qd1+ 24 Rc1 ½-½ was M.Tittel-N.Kienel, correspondence 2007.

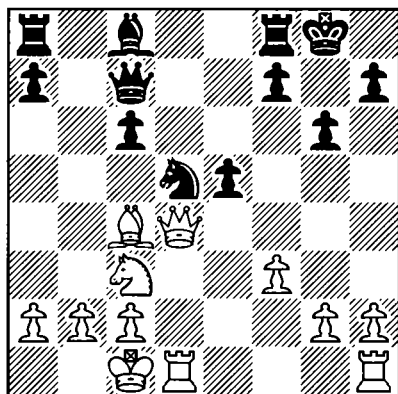
a22) 16 Nxd5 cxd5 17 Qxd5 (instead Alterman gives 17 Qxe7? Bxc2+! 18 Kxc2 Qa4+ 19 Kd2 Rac8 20 Bd3 Qa5+ 21 Ke2 Rfe8, while 17 Bd3?! can be met with 17...Bxd3 18 Rxd3 e6 with a good position for Black in K.Rjabzev-T.Kosintseva, Essentuki 2003, or even the immediate 17...e6) 17...Rab8 18 Bc4 (18 Qd4? loses to 18...Bxc2+ 19 Kxc2 Rfc8+ 20 Kb1 Rc1+, while Golubev's suggestions of 18 Qd2!? and 18 b3!? remain untried) 18...Qc7 19 Bb3 Rbd8 was drawn here in Z.Almasi-Kr.Georgiev, Ca-

cak 1996. After 20 Qc4 Rxd1+ (but not 20...Qxh2 21 Qxf7+!) 21 Rxd1 Qxh2 the position is about equal, although there is still a lot of play.

b) 14 Bc4! (**Diagram 20**) looks more testing.



**Diagram 20 (B)**



**Diagram 21 (W)**

Black has:

b1) 14...Nb6 and now:

b11) 15 Be2 Be6 16 Qc5 Rfb8 17 g3 Qb7 (17...a5!?) 18 b3 Nd5 (the players' previous encounter had gone 18...a5 19 a4 Nd5 20 Ne4 Nb4 21 Bc4 Bd5 22 Rd4 Qa7 23 Qxa7 Rxa7 24 f4 Bxe4! 25 Rxe4 Rd8 when Black was not doing so badly in A.Shirov-A.Fedorov, Batumi 1999) 19 Rd4 Nxc3 20 Qxc3 a5 21 h4 and now rather than 21...h6? 22 Ra4 Qb6 23 h5 g5 24 f4 when White was breaking through in A.Shirov-A.Fedorov, Wijk aan Zee 2001, Fedorov gives 21...c5! 22 Ra4 (or 22 Qxc5 Rc8 with the idea of ...a4) 22...Qc7 with the idea of ...Rb4 when Black has sufficient play.

b12) 15 Bd3!? Be6 16 h4 (16 Rhe1 is also possible) 16...Rfd8 17 Qe3 Nd5 18 Nxd5 Rxd5 19 h5 Qe5 20 Qxe5 Rxe5 21 hxg6 hxg6 22 Rh4! Kg7 23 Ra4! a5 24 b4 and White maintained some pressure in B.Predojevic-N.Marcetic, Obrenovac 2004.

b2) 14...e5!? (**Diagram 21**) is considered dubious by Yakovich and has not scored so well, but it may be playable.

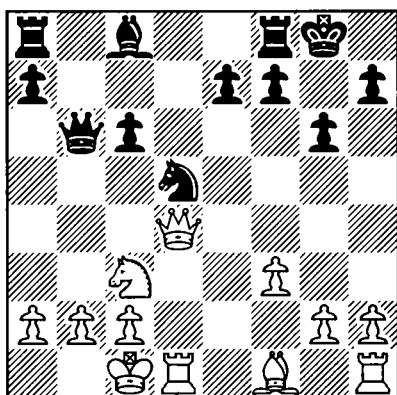
After 15 Qd2 Be6 16 Ne4 Rad8 (White was indeed better after both 16...Rab8 17 Rhe1 Qb6 18 b3 f6 19 g4 Rbd8 20 h4 in M.Perunovic-N.Ristic, Budva 2004, and 16...Nf4 17 Bxe6 Nxe6 18 Qd6 Rfd8 19 Nf6+ Kg7 20 Nd7! in D.Navara-A.Evdokimov, Pardubice 2006) 17 Qh6 and here:

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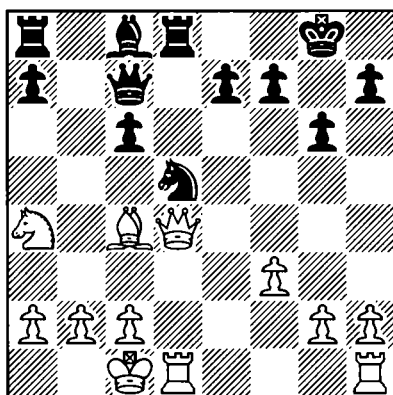
b21) 17...f5?! is too aggressive: 18 Ng5 Bc8 19 Rd3! Rfe8 (Black also has problems after 19...Qg7 20 Qxg7+ Kxg7 21 Ra3!) 20 Rhd1 Qb7 21 Bb3 e4 22 Rd4 e3 23 c4 e2 24 Re1 Nf6 25 Rxd8 Rxd8 26 c5+ Nd5 27 Rxe2 Qc7 28 Qh4 1-0 M.Juradovitch-C.Barnett, correspondence 1999.

b22) 17...f6 18 h4 (or 18 g4 Qe7 19 Rdg1?! Nb4 when Black has the initiative and won quickly after 20 Bxe6+ Qxe6 21 a3? Qa2 in K.Reed-W.Smillie, correspondence 2004) 18...Qe7 19 g4 Kh8 (not 19...Nb4? 20 Bxe6+ Qxe6 21 a3 Qa2 22 Nxf6+!) 20 Bb3 a5 21 Kb1 f5!? 22 Ng5 Bg8 23 Bxd5 Rxd5 24 Rxd5 cxd5 25 h5 gxh5 26 Qxh5 fxf6 27 Qxg4 Rf4 28 Qg3 Qg7 with unclear play in G.Psakhie-I.Ruiz Bernal, correspondence 2007.

Now we return to 13...Qb6 (**Diagram 22**):



**Diagram 22 (W)**



**Diagram 23 (W)**

### 14 Na4

White can also play 14 Nxd5 cxd5 but then 15 Qxd5?! is probably too greedy (instead 15 Qxb6 axb6 is just equal and rather drawish) 15...Be6 and here:

a) 16 Qb5 Qc7 17 Qa4 Rab8 18 Ba6 (it is safer to play 18 Bd3, but Black has good play after 18...Rfc8, 18...a5, or 18...Qc5) 18...Rb6 19 Kb1 Rfb8 20 b3 Qc3 gives Black good play for the pawn: 21 Rd3? Qc6 22 Qf4 was Xie Jun-B.Lalic, Hastings 1996/97, and here 22...Re8! would leave the a6-bishop trapped.

b) 16 Qd4 Qa5 17 Bc4 (17 a3 Rfd8 18 Qb4 Qg5+ 19 Rd2 a5 20 Qc3 Rac8 21 h4 Qf4 22 Kd1 Bd5! 23 Qxa5 Bxf3+ 24 Kc1 Be4 25 c4 Bxg2 26 Bxg2 Rxc4+ 27 Kd1 Rxd2+ 0-1 was the well-known game I.Gurevich-I.Rogers, London 1992) 17...Rfd8 18 Qe4 Bxc4 19 Qxc4 Qg5+ 20 Kb1 Qxg2 and Black had the better of things in S.Bromberger-Bu

Xiangzhi, Bad Wörishofen 2007.

### 14...Qa5

This threatens ...e5 and provokes White's response, but the less common 14...Qc7!? looks quite solid. After 15 Bc4 Rd8 (instead 15...Bf5, as played in N.McDonald-G.Jones, London 2010, invites 16 g4! Be6 17 Nc5) (**Diagram 23**) White has:

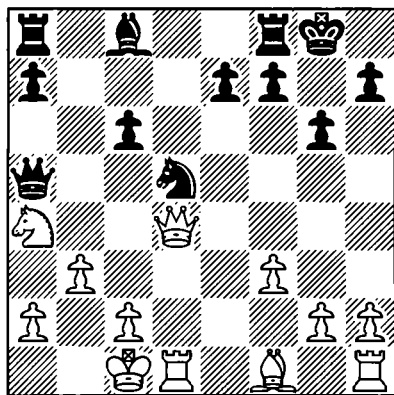
a) 16 h4?! Bf5 17 Bb3 (if 17 g4 Bxc2!) 17...Qg3! 18 Qd2?! (White should at least try 18 h5) 18...Nf4 19 Qb4 (19 Qxd8+ Rxd8 20 Rxd8+ Kg7 leaves Black much the better coordinated) 19...e6 20 Qe7 Rxd1+ 21 Rxd1 Nxf2 and Black was winning in E.Blomqvist-P.Nielsen, Helsingor 2011.

b) 16 Bb3 and then:

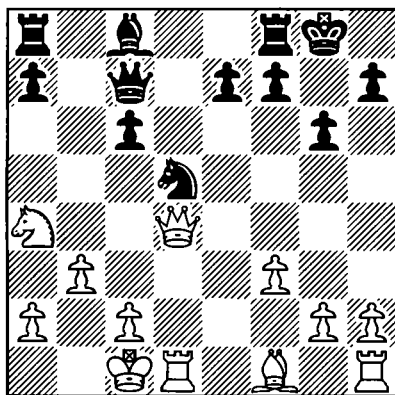
b1) 16...Bf5 17 g4 (17 g3 Rd6 18 Rhe1 Rad8 gave Black a solid position in A.Grischuk-A.Motylev, Odessa (rapid) 2010) 17...Nf4 18 Qe3 Be6 19 h4 Bxb3 20 axb3 Ng2! 21 Rxd8+ Rxd8 22 Qe4 Qf4+ 23 Qxf4 Nxf4 and Black had no problems at all in the ending in V.Ivanchuk-M.Carlsen, Leon (rapid) 2009.

b2) 16...Be6!? 17 Nc5 Nf4 (now White does not have time to break up Black's pawn structure) 18 Nxe6 Nxe6 19 Qe3 Nf4 20 g3 Nd5 21 Qg5 (or 21 Qe4 e6 22 f4 Nf6 23 Qf3 c5 24 Bc4 Rab8 which was fine for Black in S.Rublevsky-V.Cmilyte, Aix-les-Bains 2011) 21...e6 22 Rd4 Rd7 23 Rhd1 ½-½ M.Adams-P.Nielsen, Khanty-Mansiysk 2011.

### 15 b3 (Diagram 24)



**Diagram 24 (B)**



**Diagram 25 (W)**

This makes some weaknesses around White's king, but it may prove useful as well, as it secures the a4- and c4-squares and gives White's king some luft.

### **15...Qc7**

This is the most popular move. Black heads for a position similar to those in the previous note. There are a few other sensible ideas, but White seems to maintain a slight pull in any case:

a) 15...Rb8 intends ...Rb4. Now 16 a3 Bf5 17 g4 Be6 18 Bc4 Rfd8 19 Qe5 Rd6 20 Rhe1 Rbd8 21 Kb2 f6 22 Qg3 Kf8 23 Rd3 Bf7 24 Qf2 Nf4 25 Rxd6 Rxd6 26 Qe3 e5 27 Bxf7 Kxf7 gave Black a very pleasant position in V.Baklan-A.Shabalov, Khanty-Mansiysk (rapid) 2009, but instead the rather simple 16 Qc5 Qxc5 (16...Qc7?? 17 Rxd5) 17 Nxc5 gives White an obvious, if small advantage.

b) 15...Be6 and here:

b1) 16 Bc4 Rfd8 17 Qc5 takes the c5-square away from the a4-knight. After 17...Qc7 18 Kb1 Nf4 19 g3 Bxc4 20 Qxc4 Nd5 21 Rhe1 Nb6 Black had no problems in M.Adams-G.Jones, Sheffield 2011.

b2) 16 Qd2 Qc7 17 Nc5 (after 17 c4 both 17...Nf6 and 17...Nf4 look fine because White has weakened his king position) 17...Rad8! 18 Nxe6 and now Black can simply play 18...fxe6, when his active pieces compensate for the pawn weaknesses, or even 18...Qe5!? 19 Nd4 c5 with interesting complications.

b3) 16 Qe5 (this threatens c4) 16...Qb4 17 Kb2!? (17 c4 Nf6 is less clear) 17...Rad8 18 Rd4 Qd6 19 Qxd6 exd6 20 Bc4 Nb6 21 Bxe6 fxe6 22 Rhd1 Nxa4+ 23 Rxa4 Rf7 24 Ra6 Rc7 25 Rd4 and White had a slight pull in the ending in M.Golubev-C.Koepke, Kharkov 2006.

c) 15...Bf5 16 Qc5! (White does not achieve much with 16 g4 Be6 17 Qe5 Qb4) 16...Qxc5 (not 16...Qc7! 17 Rxd5) 17 Nxc5 Nc3 (Black wins a pawn, but White gets more than enough for it) 18 Re1 Nxa2+ 19 Kb2 Nb4 20 Bc4! (20 Rxe7 Rfe8 allows Black to activate his pieces) 20...Rfe8 (Black should consider grabbing another pawn with 20...Nxc2!? 21 Rxe7 Nb4 22 Ra1 a5 in order to return it after 23 g4 Be6 24 Nxe6 fxe6 25 Rxe6 Kg7 when he should hold the ending) 21 g4 Bc8 22 Re5 Kf8 (White also had good compensation for the pawn after 22...e6 23 Ne4 Kg7 24 Ra5 Nd5 25 Rha1 in J.Van der Wiel-M.Golubev, German League 1999) 23 c3 f6 (after 23...Nd5 24 Bxd5 cxd5 25 Rxd5 White's pieces dominate) 24 Re6! Nd5 25 Rxc6 and White dominated the board in F.Caruana-S.Fruebing, German League 2010.

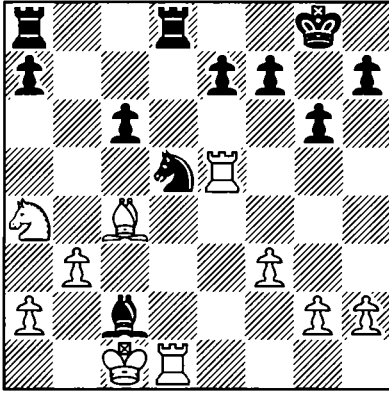
Returning to 15...Qc7 (**Diagram 25**):

### **16 h4**

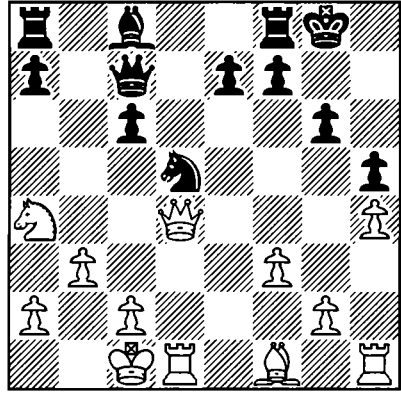
This is the most direct, but White has tried a couple of other ideas as well:

a) 16 Bc4 Rd8 17 Rhe1!? (White elects to play in the centre; instead 17 g4 Be6 18 Nc5 Nf4 19 Nxe6 Nxe6 20 Qe3 Nf4 was fine for Black in M.Pavlovic-P.Konguvel,

Pamplona 2010) 17...Bf5 (Black could try the brazen 17...Qxh2!?) 18 Qe5! Qxe5 19 Rxe5 Bxc2 (**Diagram 26**).



**Diagram 26 (W)**



**Diagram 27 (W)**



**NOTE:** Just because a tempting move works tactically, the resulting position must still be assessed properly. While this tactical motif is a typical idea, White is not misguided in allowing it.

White can still play for an advantage with 20 Rd2! (a draw results after 20 Kxc2 Nb4+ 21 Kc1 Nxa2+ 22 Kc2 Nb4+) 20...Bf5 21 Nc5 (White could also try the immediate 21 Bxd5 cxd5 22 Rxe7 d4 23 Kb2 when Black has some counterplay, although White still seems better) 21...h5 22 Bxd5 cxd5 23 Rxe7 d4 (Black could liquidate his weaknesses with 23...Rac8! 24 b4 a5! 25 a3 axb4 26 axb4 d4 when he has no problems) 24 Kb2 (24 Ne4!?) 24...a5! 25 Ne4 a4 26 Rc7 Rab8 27 Rd3 axb3 28 axb3 Rb5 and the game was soon drawn in J.Smeets-P.Negi, German League 2010.

b) 16 Re1 stops ...e5 and prepares an exchange of queens. Black has:

b1) 16...Rd8 17 Qe5 Qxe5 18 Rxe5 f6 19 Re1 e5 20 Nc5 Kf8 21 g3 a5 22 a4 h5 23 Bc4 Nb6 24 Be6 Rd5?! (better is 24...Nd7, although White still has some chances after 25 Bxd7 Bxd7 26 f4!) 25 Bxd5 cxd5 26 f4! e4 27 Kd2 Bf5 28 Ke3 d4+ 29 Kxd4 Rd8+ 30 Kc3 (30 Ke3 Nd5+ 31 Kf2 Rc8! is not so clear) 30...Rc8 and now, short on time, White repeated moves with 31 Kd4 in S.Shankland-R.Robson, Saint Louis 2010, but 31 b4! would have allowed him to play for a win.

b2) 16...Nb6 17 Nc3 (this controls the d5-square, but White could also try the thematic 17 Nc5) 17...a5 18 Qe5 Qxe5 19 Rxe5 Be6 20 a4 Rfc8 (Black intends ...c5-c4)

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

21 Ne2!? (21 Be2 c5 22 Rd1 c4 23 Kb2 was suggested by Yakovich) 21...Kf8 22 Nf4 Bd7 23 Nd3 f6 24 Rc5 e5 25 Be2 Be6 was pretty level in P.Leko-T.Radjabov, Nanjing 2009. Black has enough space and his pawn weaknesses are easy to cover.

### **16...h5 (Diagram 27)**

The march of the h-pawn is genuinely dangerous. The alternative 16...Bf5 entices White to weaken the f4-square, but it is rather provocative: 17 g4 Be6 (17...e5?! 18 Qc5 Be6 19 h5 g5 is well met by 20 Bd3 intending Be4 or even 20 h6!?) 18 Nc5 Rad8 19 Bc4 (Black has some counterplay after 19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 h5 Rf4) 19...Bc8 (Black could try 19...Nf4!? 20 Nxe6 Nxe6 21 Qe4 and now 21...Qf4+ 22 Kb2 Qxe4 23 fxe4 looks better for White, but 21...Nf4!? is possible) 20 h5 e5?! (after 20...Nb6 Jones gives both 21 Qe4 Nxc4 22 Qxc4 Qe5, when Black's active queen gives him some counterplay, and 21 Qe3! Nxc4 22 bxc4 Rd6 23 Rd3! when White's powerful knight allows him to keep the initiative despite his broken pawn structure) 21 Qf2 Qe7 22 Ne4 g5 23 h6 Kh8 24 Qc5 Qxc5 25 Nxc5 and White had a big advantage in the ending in D.Howell-L.McShane, London 2010.

### **17 Bc4**

This is very natural, but there are several alternatives to consider:

a) 17 g4 misses the mark after 17...Qf4+ 18 Qxf4 Nxf4 when White's pawn weaknesses are at least as serious as Black's.

b) 17 Kb2 Rd8 18 Bc4 Bf5 is a bit awkward for White: for example, 19 Nc3? Bxc2! was J.Friedel-R.Robson, Philadelphia 2009. It is better to play 19 Qc5 Qe5+ when White must avoid 20 Kb1?? Nc3+, but even after 20 c3 Qg3! Black stands well. The a4-knight looks rather silly.

c) 17 Re1 Nb6 18 Nc3 Rd8 19 Qe5 Qd6 20 Kb2 Bf5 21 Ba6 Qxe5 22 Rxe5 Rd2 23 Re2 Rad8 24 Rhe1 Kf8 was level in P.Leko-T.Radjabov, Elista 2008.

d) 17 Bd3!? is a fresh idea: 17...Nf4 (alternatives are 17...Nb6 18 Nc3! and 17...Rd8 18 Be4!?) 18 Qf2 Nxd3+ 19 Rxd3 Bf5 20 Rd2 Rac8 21 Qe3 (if 21 Nc5 Rfd8 22 Rhd1 Rd5! when 23 c4? fails to 23...Qe5!, while 21 Rhd1 c5 22 Nc3 Qb7 looks satisfactory for Black) 21...Rfd8 22 Rhd1 Rd5 23 Kb2 e5?! (this only creates weaknesses; better is 23...Rcd8) 24 Nc3 Rxd2 25 Rxd2 Qe7 26 g3 Re8 27 Ne4 gave White a sizable plus in A.Ivanov-S.Kudrin, Nashua 2010.

### **17...Nb6 (Diagram 28)**

Black looks to exchange pieces. The alternative is 17...Rd8 when White has:

a) 18 Rhe1 Bf5 19 Qe5 Qxe5 20 Rxe5 Bxc2 (this is hardly forced, so Black could try 20...e6) 21 Rd2 Bf5 22 Bxd5 cxd5 23 Rxd5 (23 Rxe7 d4 is similar to Smeets-Giri in note 'a' to White's 16th move, above) 23...e6 24 Rxd8+ Rxd8 25 Rc5 Kg7 was level in



M.Sebag-M.Calzetta Ruiz, Novi Sad 2009.

b) 18 g4! is more challenging: 18...hxg4 19 h5 (even 19 fxg4!? looks promising) 19...g5 20 fxg4 Qf4+ 21 Qxf4 gxf4 22 Nc3 (Ward suggests 22 Be2!? with the idea of c4 and Bf3) 22...Bb7 23 Bxd5 cxd5 24 Rhe1 Rd7 25 Rd4 gave White the better chances in the ending in R.Swinkels-D.Reinderman, Groningen 2009.

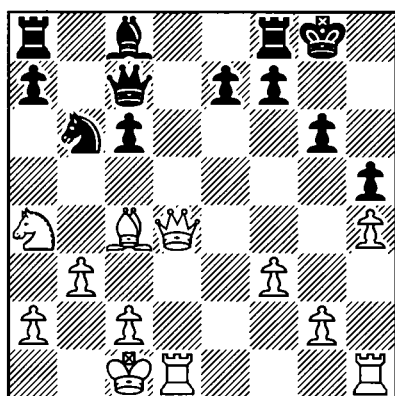


Diagram 28 (W)

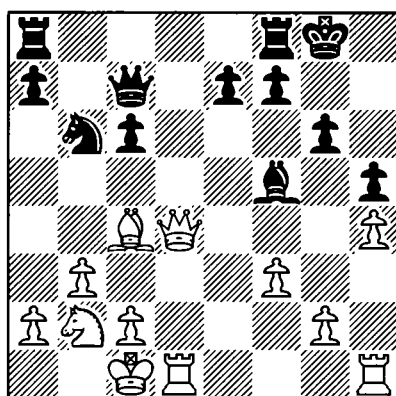


Diagram 29 (W)

### 18 Nb2

Here 18 g4 is less dangerous: 18...Nxc4 (it is more important to eliminate the bishop) 19 Qxc4 Be6 20 Qc5 Qf4+ 21 Kb1 Qxf3 22 gxh5 Qxh5 23 Qxe7 Rfe8 24 Qf6 Bf5 25 Rd2? (25 Nc3 would be unclear) was M.Piper-G.Jones, Newport Pagnell (rapid) 2010, and here 25...Qf3! would hit the h1-rook and threaten to win White's queen with ...Bxc2+.

### 18...Bf5 (Diagram 29) 19 Rhe1

Again 19 g4?! would be too rash. After 19...Rad8 20 Qe3 Rxd1+ 21 Rxd1 hxg4 22 fxg4 Bxg4 23 Rg1 Bh5 (23...Bf5!? eyes c2 and looks good: for example, 24 h5? Qh2!) 24 Qg5 Qh2! 25 Rg2 Qh1+ 26 Rg1 Qe4! 27 Bd3 (not 27 Qxh5? Qe3+) 27...Qd4! (Black keeps an eye on the white rook) 28 Rg3 Nd5 29 Nc4? Qa1+ 0-1 was S.Narayanan-P.Negi, Delhi 2010.

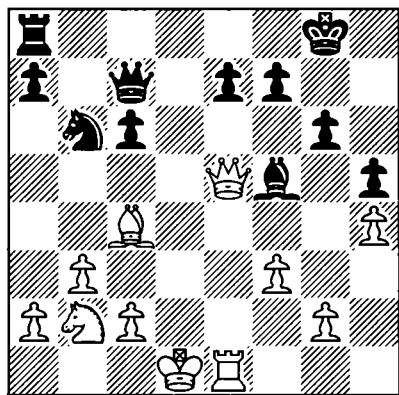
### 19...Rfd8

It does not seem to matter which rook goes to the d-file, but a better defensive plan was seen after 19...Rad8 20 Qe3 Rxd1+ 21 Kxd1 Qd8+! 22 Bd3 e6 23 g3 Nd5 24 Bxf5 exf5 25 Kc1 f4! 26 gxf4 Qxh4 and by now Black had very good counterplay in

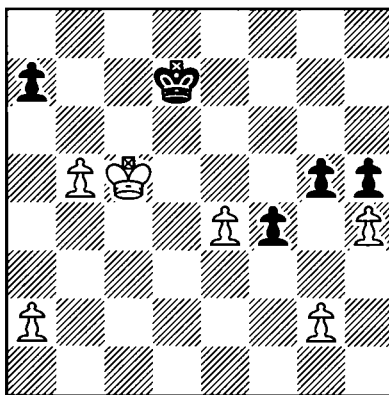
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

A.Barnsley-P.Schuster, correspondence 2005.

**20 Qe5 Rxd1+ 21 Kxd1 (Diagram 30)**



**Diagram 30 (B)**



**Diagram 31 (W)**

**21...Qxe5?!**



**WARNING: Simplification does not always help the defender. Here the ending is very pleasant for White, so better was 21...Qd8+! as in the game mentioned above.**

**22 Rxe5 Nxc4**

This exchange also looks a bit questionable.

**23 Nxc4 Be6?!**

White's knight is stronger than Black's bishop, but Black will be too passive in the rook ending. A better try was 23...Rd8+ 24 Ke2 Kf8.

**24 Rc5 Bxc4 25 Rxc4 Rc8 26 Kd2**

White has a better rook, the better pawns, and a better king.

**26...f6 27 Rd4 Rc7 28 Kc3 e5?! 29 Rd6 Kf7 30 Kc4 Ke7 31 Kc5 Rd7 32 Rxd7+!**

Well calculated.

**32...Kxd7 33 b4 f5 34 c4 f4 35 b5 cxb5 36 cxb5 e4 37 fxe4 g5 (Diagram 31) 38 Kd4!**

The queen ending is also winning after 38 hxg5 f3 39 gxf3 h4 40 g6 Ke6 41 g7 Kf7 42 e5 h3 43 e6+ Kxg7 44 Kd6 h2 45 e7 h1Q 46 e8Q, but Volokitin finds a simpler and cleverer way to win.

9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5

38...gxh4 39 Kd3 f3 40 Ke3!

The key move, which had to be seen in advance. Black's connected pawns are harmless, while White's pawns will be unstoppable.

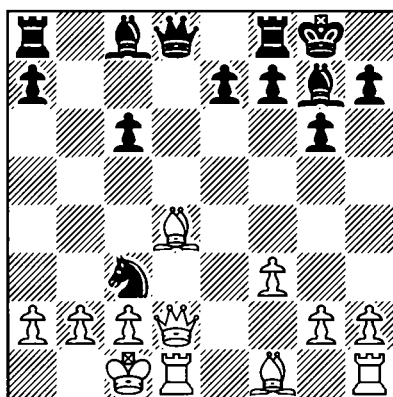
40...fxg2 41 Kf2 h3 42 a4! Kd6 43 a5 Kc5 44 b6 axb6 45 a6 Kc6 46 e5 1-0

### Game 30

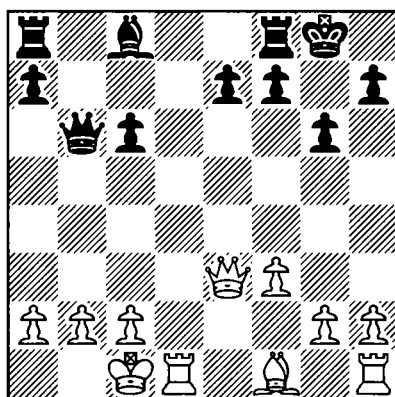
**L.Dominguez Perez-D.Smerdon**

Khanty-Mansiysk 2009

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4 Nxc3 (Diagram 32)



**Diagram 32 (W)**



**Diagram 33 (W)**

This line was popularized by Alterman. Black elects to exchange both knight and bishop.

**13 Qxc3**

Instead 13 Bxc3 Qxd2 14 Bxd2 is level. With only rooks and bishops on the board, White has no attacking chances and it will be difficult to exploit Black's split pawns.

**13...Bh6+ 14 Be3**

Of course not 14 Kb1?? e5 when Black wins material.

**14...Bxe3+ 15 Qxe3 Qb6 (Diagram 33)**

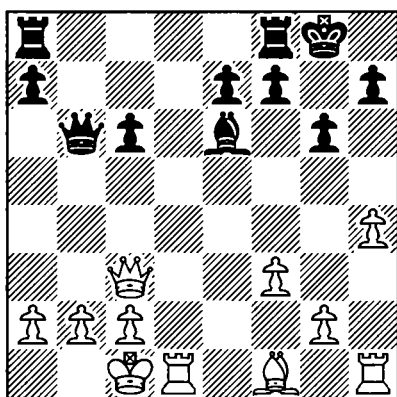
It is important to gain time by challenging the strong position of the white queen,

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

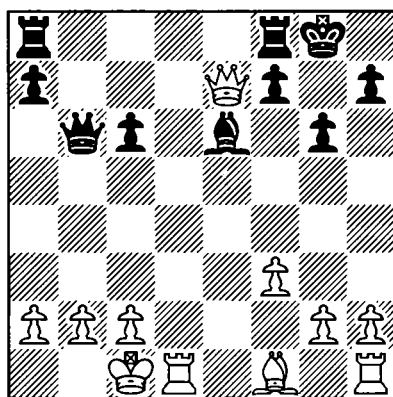
even at the cost of a pawn. The alternative 15...Qa5 16 Bc4 gives White a comfortable plus – he is better developed, has the better pawn structure, and there is the simple plan of pushing the h-pawn.

### 16 Qxe7

Instead 16 Qxb6 axb6 is equal, of course, but 16 Qc3!? is a reasonable alternative. Following 16...Be6 Black is fine after 17 Kb1 Rfd8 and 17 Bc4 Bxc4 18 Qxc4 Rfd8, but 17 h4! (**Diagram 34**) poses some questions:



**Diagram 34 (B)**



**Diagram 35 (W)**

a) 17...h5 18 g4 hxg4 19 h5 looks too dangerous.

b) 17...Rfd8 18 Bd3 Qe3+ (also possible is 18...Rd5) 19 Kb1 c5 20 h5 Qd4 actually transposes to variation 'a11' in the notes to Black's 13th move in Game 29!

c) 17...Rad8 18 Bd3 Rd5 19 h5 Rc5 (Black could also try 19...Qd4) 20 Qe1 Rb8 21 b3 Bxb3?! (Black had to try 21...Qb4 when White can play for a small advantage in the endgame or try 22 Qg3!?) 22 axb3 Qxb3 23 Rh4 (it looks like White could throw in 23 hxg6 hxg6 and only then play 24 Rh4) 23...f5?! (23...Qa3+ 24 Kd2 Rb4 is a better try) 24 Bc4+? (a faulty combination that goes unpunished; instead 24 Qf2 gives White every chance of success) 24...Rxc4 25 Qe6+ Kf8 26 Qxc4 was S.Shankland-A.Pavlidis, Vung Tau 2008. Here Black had an instant draw with 26...Qe3+ 27 Rd2 Qe1+.

### 16...Be6 (Diagram 35)

Black develops and cuts off the white queen, thereby threatening 17...Qe3+ when 18 Kb1 would lose to 18...Bxa2+.

**17 Bd3**

The main alternative is the immediate retreat 17 Qa3, which will be covered in the next game. There are a couple of other tries:

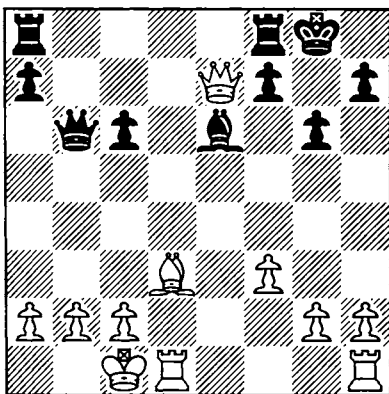
a) 17 Kb1 is the most obvious move, but Black has excellent compensation for the pawn after 17...c5 18 b3 Rad8!: for example, 19 Rxd8 (bad is 19 Bd3 c4? and 19 Be2 can be met with 19...Bxb3 with the idea of ...Rde8) 19...Rxd8 20 Be2 c4.

b) 17 Qf6 and now:

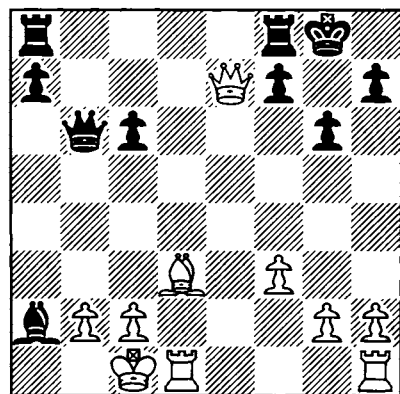
b1) 17...Bxa2 18 b3 Bxb3! 19 cxb3 Qxb3 20 Rd3 Qb6 (20...Qa2!? is also possible) gave Black sufficient play to hold the balance in V.Topalov-K.Georgiev, Elenite 1994.

b2) 17...Rfd8 (this had been considered dubious, but Black has a big improvement on a well-known game) 18 Bd3 Bxa2 19 Rhe1 Rab8 20 h4 Rd4! (instead White's attack proved to be stronger after 20...Qa5 21 Re5 Bd5 22 h5 Qa1+ 23 Kd2 Qxb2 24 hxg6 fxg6 25 Bxg6! in I.Gurevich-M.Petursson, St Martin 1992) 21 b3 Bxb3! 22 cxb3 Qb4! 23 Qxc6 (forced, as Black wins after 23 Bc2 Qa3+ 24 Kb1 Rxb3+) 23...Kg7! (a clever move which prepares ...Rxd3, as the immediate 23...Rxd3? fails after 24 Re8+) 24 Re3 (Black wins after 24 Bc2 Qa3+, while 24 Qc2 Rxd3! 25 Qxd3 Qa3+ 26 Kd2 Qb2+ 27 Ke3 Rxb3 favours Black) 24...Rdd8! 25 Qc2 Rbc8 ½-½ was G.Somogyi-R.Bocanegra Moreno, correspondence 2008. After 26 Bc4 Qa3+ 27 Kb1 Rxd1+ 28 Qxd1 Rxc4 29 bxc4 Qxe3 Black's position still looks a bit better, but in a correspondence game White should hold without difficulty.

After 17 Bd3 (**Diagram 36**)



**Diagram 36 (B)**



**Diagram 37 (W)**

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

White has caught up in development so Black must play with a lot of energy to justify his pawn sacrifice.

**17...Qe3+**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT: This was considered insufficient for a long time, but Australian GM David Smerdon has proven it to be quite playable.**

There are a few alternatives, of which variation 'c' still looks reliable:

a) 17...Rab8 18 b3 c5 19 Rhe1 a5 (19...c4 20 Rxe6! is a common theme) 20 Re4 was too slow in A.Sokolov-G.Dinu, Belfort 1991.

b) 17...c5 18 Be4 (also possible is 18 Qf6!/? Rab8 19 h4) 18...Rab8 19 Qf6 Qa6 20 a3 Qc4 21 Rd6 Qa2 22 Rhd1 (White is prepared to give up the extra pawn if he can reach a better endgame) 22...a5 23 h4 Qa1+ 24 Kd2 Qxb2 25 Qxb2 Rxb2 26 Kc3 gave White the upper hand in T.Petrosian-Li Chao, Dresden Olympiad 2008. Black's queenside pawns are weak and 26...Ra2 fails to 27 Rxe6 fxe6 28 Kb3, as pointed out by Golubev.

c) 17...Bxa2 (**Diagram 37**) looks sufficient. White has:

c1) 18 b3 does not lead anywhere after 18...Bxb3 19 cxb3 Qxb3: for example, 20 Bc2 Qc3 21 Rhe1 Qa1+ 22 Kd2 Qa5+ 23 Kc1 Qa1+ 24 Kd2 Qa5+ 25 Kc1 with a draw was seen in L.Dominguez Perez-Y.Gonzalez Vidal, Matanzas 1998. We will see that Dominguez Perez still favoured 17 Bd3 more than ten years later!

c2) 18 Rhe1 c5 (18...Bd5 also looks okay) 19 b3 Bxb3 20 cxb3 Qxb3 is similar: 21 Qf6 Rab8 22 Qa1 Rfd8 23 Bc2 Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 Qe3+ 25 Rd2 Rd8 26 Qa5 Rd4 27 h4 Qe1+ 28 Bd1 ½-½ J.Ehlvest-S.Kudrin, Reno 2006.

c3) 18 h4 and now:

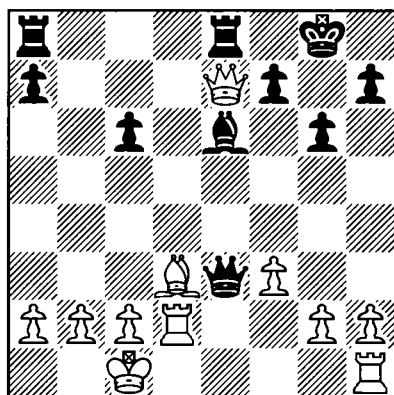
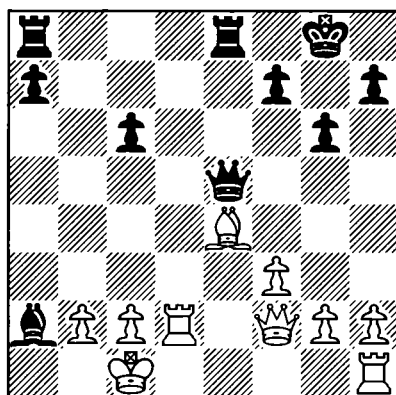
c31) 18...Rfe8 19 Qf6 Qe3+ 20 Rd2 Rad8 (Black's compensation was insufficient after 20...Bd5 21 c4 Rad8 22 cxd5 Rxd5 23 Kc2 in L.Dominguez Perez-Y.Gonzalez Vidal, Camaguey 1999) 21 Qg5 was T.Wedberg-R.Winsnes, Swedish League 2006. Now 21...Rxd3! 22 cxd3 Qd4 gives Black good play: for example, 23 h5 loses to 23...Re5. White can improve, however, with 21 h5!.

c32) 18...c5 19 Qe5? (Black is also doing well after 19 b3 Rae8 and 19 h5 c4, but 19 Be4!/? Rab8 20 Qe5 intending Qc3 is possible now that there is no ...Qe3) 19...c4 20 Be4 Qe3+ 21 Rd2 Rab8 22 c3 Rxb2 was M.Adams-J.Karr, France (simul) 2000. Here Dearing points out that 22...Rfd8! 23 Qg5 Qxd2+ 24 Qxd2 Rxd2 25 Kxd2 Rxb2+ would leave Black with a healthy extra pawn.

Returning to Smerdon's 17...Qe3+:

**18 Rd2**

Not 18 Kb1?? Bxa2+.

**18...Rfe8! (Diagram 38)****Diagram 38 (W)****Diagram 39 (B)**

This is the improvement. Black is struggling after the alternative 18...c5 19 Qh4 c4 20 Re1 (Black gets excellent compensation for the exchange after 20 Bxc4 Rad8 21 Bd3 Rxd3! 22 cxd3 Rc8+ 23 Kd1 Bxa2) 20...Qc5 because of the thematic exchange sacrifice 21 Rxe6!: for example, 21...c3 (even worse is 21...fxe6 22 Bxc4, L.Dominguez Perez-I.Bajo Gutierrez, San Miguel 1999) 22 bxc3 fxe6 23 Bc4 Qg1+ 24 Kb2 Qb6+ 25 Bb3 and White's position was easier to play in A.Sokolov-A.Dunnington, French League 1998. White's pawns may be wrecked, but his king is still safer and the b3-bishop is strong.

**19 Qh4?!**

This leads to trouble. Instead 19 Qa3 Rad8 20 Rhd1 Bf5 21 Qc3 (21 Bxf5? Qxd2+! mates) 21...Bxd3 22 cxd3 c5! leaves White rather tied up, so he should have played 19 Qf6 Rad8! 20 h4 Bf5 and now:

a) 21 h5 Bxd3 22 h6 Kf8 23 Rh4 Bxc2 24 Qg7+ Ke7 25 Re4+ Bxe4 26 Qe5+ Kf8 27 Qg7+ with a draw is given by Smerdon.

b) 21 Qg5!? Qe6! (White retains a pull after 21...Bxd3 22 Qxe3 Rxe3 23 cxd3 Rxd3 24 Rhd1) 22 Kb1 (22 Bxf5? Qe1+ mates) 22...Bxd3 23 cxd3 Rd5 gives Black active play.

**19...Bxa2! 20 Qf2**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Black is also doing well after 20 b3 Qe5! 21 Rdd1 Bxb3!? 22 cxb3 Qc3+ 23 Bc2 Re2 24 Rd8+ Rxd8 25 Qxd8+ Kg7 26 Qd3 Qa1+ 27 Bb1 Qb2+ 28 Kd1 Rxc2 according to Smerdon.

**20...Qe5 21 Be4 (Diagram 39) 21...Rab8?!**

After this move White is able to catch his breath. Instead Smerdon gives 21...Be6! 22 Qd4 Qa5 23 b4 Qa4 intending ...Rab8 and then ...c5 or ...a5 with a strong attack.

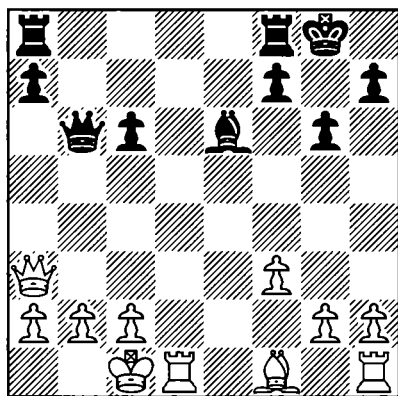
**22 Qd4 Qa5 23 Rd3 Qg5+ 24 Rd2 Red8 25 Qc3 Rxd2 26 Qxd2 Qf6 27 c3 Rd8 28 Qe3 Qe5 29 g3 Bb3 30 Re1 Qa5 31 Bb1 Qa1 32 Qe7 Qa5 33 Qe3 Qa1 34 Qe7 Qa5 ½-½**

### Game 31

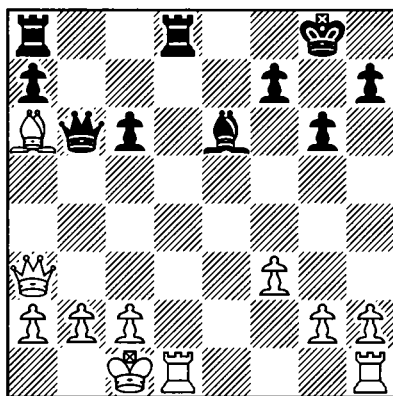
**F.Corrales Jimenez-A.Gonzalez Perez**

Badalona 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bd4 Nxc3 13 Qxc3 Bh6+ 14 Be3 Bxe3+ 15 Qxe3 Qb6 16 Qxe7 Be6 17 Qa3 (Diagram 40)**



**Diagram 40 (B)**



**Diagram 41 (B)**

White immediately brings the queen back to safety and covers the sensitive b2-pawn at the same time.

**17...Rad8**



**NOTE:** Often it is difficult to decide 'which rook' in these positions, because it is unclear if Black should keep the option of bringing his queen's rook to the b-file or if he should centralize.



Here there is some evidence to support the latter choice, but Black has also played 17...Rfd8, which still seems playable. White has:

a) 18 Bd3 Rd5 19 Rhe1 (19 b3 Rad8 leads back to the main game) 19...Ra5 20 Qc3 Rxa2 21 b3 reminds us that it is a common theme for White to return the pawn if he can grab the initiative. Black has:

a1) 21...c5?! allows the thematic 22 Rxe6! Qxe6 (22...fxe6 23 Bc4 is crushing) 23 Bc4 Qc6? (23...Qb6 24 Bxf7+ wins immediately, while the relatively best 23...Qc8 is well met by 24 Rd5! with the idea of Rxc5) 24 Bd5 Qa6 (White also wins after 24...Qc8 25 Bxa8 Qxa8 26 Qf6) 25 Bxa8 Ra1+ 26 Kd2 Qd6+ 27 Qd3 Qf4+ 28 Ke2 1-0 was J.Rowson-K.Mah, British League 1999.

a2) 21...Ra5 22 Bc4 (22 Kb2 was suggested by Golubev) 22...Bxc4 23 Qxc4 Ra1+ 24 Kb2 Rxd1 25 Rxd1 Qf2?! (25...Rd8! should hold) 26 Qxc6 Rf8 27 g4! Qxh2 28 Rd7 and White kept some pressure in G.Gopal-S.Narayanan, Mumbai 2009.

a3) 21...Rd8!? 22 Qf6 Qd4 (22...Qa5! 23 Kb1 Rd6!? looks okay) 23 Qxd4 Rxd4 24 Kb1 Ra5 25 Be4 Rxd1+ 26 Rxd1 Bd5 was J.Friedel-D.Gorman, Philadelphia 2010. Now 27 Bxd5 cxd5 28 c3 would give White excellent chances in the rook endgame.

b) With 18 Ba6!? (**Diagram 41**) White looks to prove that Black played the wrong rook to d8. Then 18...Qf2 (after 18...c5 the g1-a7 diagonal is closed and White can regroup with 19 Be2! c4 20 f4 Rd4 21 Rxd4 Qxd4 22 g3 c3 23 Qxc3 Qxc3 24 bxc3 Bxa2 25 Kb2 when he eventually realized his extra pawn in G.Kasparov-V.Topalov, Amsterdam 1995; however Golubev's suggestions of 18...Rab8!? 19 Rhe1 Rd5 20 Rxd5 cxd5! and 18...Rd5!? 19 Rxd5 cxd5 are interesting) 19 Bb7 exploits the rook on a8. After 19...Rab8 20 Bxc6 Qxg2 White has:

b1) 21 Qe3 Rdc8! 22 Ba4?! (better is 22 Be4 Bxa2 with unclear play) 22...Bf5 23 Qd2 Qxf3 leaves White in trouble: 24 c3? Rxc3+! (24...Rd8! is even better) 25 Qxc3 Qf4+ 26 Rd2 Qe4 0-1 was J.Cruz-Lima-G.Camacho Penate, Cuba 2001.

b2) 21 Qxa7 Qg5+ 22 Kb1 Rxb2+! gives Black a lot of play: 23 Kxb2 Qe5+ 24 Kb1 (24 c3 Rb8+ 25 Bb7 Qc7 gives Black great play) 24...Rb8+ 25 Kc1 Qa1+ 26 Kd2 Rd8+ 27 Bd7!? (27 Ke2 Bc4+ 28 Kf2 Rxd1 is level according to Kasparov) 27...Qf6 28 Ke3 Qg5+ 29 f4 Qe7 30 Kf3 Bxd7 31 Kg3 Qe6 32 h3 and now 32...Qe4 gives Black sufficient compensation according to Solovjov, while 32...h5 led to a draw in H.Muller-M.Monasterio, correspondence 2001.

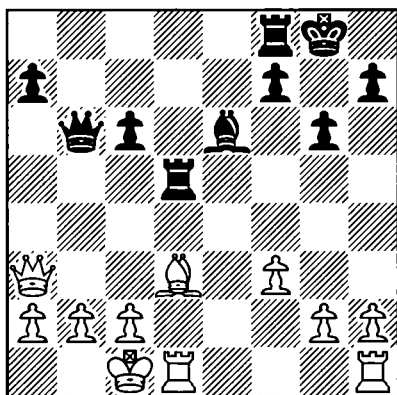
b3) 21 Be4!? is White's latest try: 21...Rbc8?! (21...Rdc8!? looks like a better try) 22 h4! Rd2 23 Rxd2 Qxh1+ 24 Rd1 Qxh4 25 Qxa7 and White's passed a-pawn gave him the advantage in S.Sjugirov-S.Solovjov, St Petersburg 2009.

Returning to 17...Rad8:

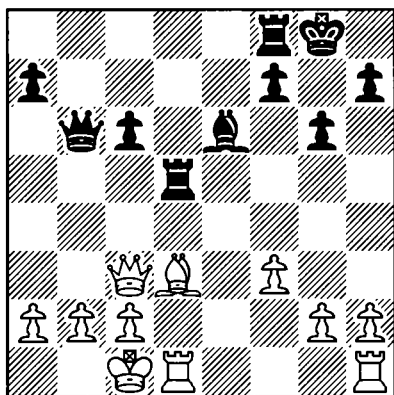
### **18 Bd3**

Here 18 Ba6 is well met by 18...Qf2 because 19 Bb7 does not hit a rook. White has also tried 18 Re1 Rfe8 (White is a little better after 18...Rd5 19 Bc4 Ra5 20 Qc3 Bxc4 21 Qxc4 Rb8 22 b3 Rxa2 23 Re7 Rf8 24 Qc3 Ra5 25 Rhe1 because of his active rooks and superior structure) 19 Bd3 c5 20 Qa4 Rb8 21 b3 Red8 22 Qa6 Qc7 23 Rxe6?! fxe6 24 Qxe6+ Kg7 25 h4 which gives him typical compensation. After 25...Re8 26 Qc4 Qe5 27 Kb1, as in J.Becerra Rivero-V.Gallego Jimenez, Linares 1997, 27...Rb4!? 28 Qa6 Re7 would allow Black to maintain the balance.

### **18...Rd5 (Diagram 42)**



**Diagram 42 (W)**



**Diagram 43 (B)**

Black intends ...Ra5.

### **19 b3**

White defends against the 'threat' to win the a2-pawn, but he may also ignore it. Black may win back the pawn, but this will take time and White will still have the superior pawn structure. White has:

a) With 19 Rhe1 White simply centralizes his pieces. Black has:

a1) 19...Rfd8 20 Qc3 c5 and here:

a11) 21 Bf1 Rd4! makes it difficult for White to make progress. After 22 Rxd4 cxd4 23 Qa3 Qc7 24 g3 Bf5 25 Bd3 Bxd3 26 Qxd3 Qa5 27 Re4 Qxa2 28 Rxd4 Qa1+ 29 Kd2 Rf8! Black's active queen gave him sufficient counterplay in S.Megaranto-Li Chao, Olongapo City 2010.

a12) 21 Re5! Rxe5 22 Qxe5 Bxa2?! (this does not work out very well, but after

22...c4 23 Be2 Black has little to show for the pawn) 23 b3 Bxb3 (instead 23...Qb4 24 Kb2 c4 25 Be2 Rxd1 26 Bxd1 Qd2 27 Qe2 c3+ 28 Kxa2 Qc1 29 Qe8+ Kg7 30 Qe5+ Kg8 31 Qxc3 Qxd1 32 g3 leaves White up a pawn for nothing in a queen ending) 24 cxb3 Qxb3 25 Bc2 Qa3+ 26 Kb1 Qb4+ 27 Qb2 Rxd1+ 28 Bxd1 Qe1 29 Kc2 and White went on to win in D.Howell-R.Pert, Sheffield 2011.

a2) 19...Ra5 20 Qc3 Rxa2 21 b3 Ra5 (after 21...Qa5?! 22 Qxa5 Rxa5 23 Kb2 White had a nice little edge in R.Kasimdzhanov-B.Alterman, Bad Wiessee 1997) and now: a21) 22 Kb2 Rd5! 23 Bc4 Rxd1 24 Rxd1 Bxc4 25 Qxc4 Qf2 gave Black counterplay in S.Fedorchuk-A.Timofeev, Budva 2009.

a22) 22 Bc4 Bxc4 23 Qxc4 Rc5?! (better is 23...Ra1+ 24 Kb2 Rxd1 25 Rxd1 Qf2 transposing to variation 'a21') 24 Qd4 Qb5 25 Kb2 a5 26 Ra1 and White was a little better because of his better pawn structure in E.Alekseev-F.Caruana, Biel 2009.

a23) 22 Rxe6!? is a typical idea. Black must be careful, but he should not experience any real difficulties here: 22...fxe6 23 Bc4 Re8 (White looks a little bit better after 23...Rd5 24 Bxd5 cxd5 25 Re1) 24 Re1 (White cannot afford to play 24 Kb2?! Qc7 25 Re1 Qg7 26 Bxe6+ Kf8 when Black had no trouble winning the ending in P.Carlsson-R.Winsnes, Swedish League 2005, and Black is also better after 24 Rd7 Qg1+ 25 Kd2 Qa1!) 24...Kf7 25 g4! Qc5 26 f4 (26 b4 Qg5+ 27 Kb2 Rd5 28 Bxd5 cxd5 is level) 26...Qa3+ 27 Kd2 was drawn here in K.Varberg-K.Hansen, correspondence 2008. After 27...Qd6+ 28 Kc1 Qxf4+ 29 Kb1 White has enough for the exchange, but no more than that.

b) 19 Qc3 (**Diagram 43**) brings the queen back into play.

After 19...Rc5 White has tried:

b1) 20 Qd4!? leads to an ending where White has a very small advantage: 20...Bxa2 (20...Rd8 21 Qf6! looks promising) 21 b4! Rh5 (similar is 21...Rg5, but 21...Rd5?? would lose to 22 Qxb6 axb6 23 Kb2) 22 Qxb6 axb6 23 Be4 Bd5 24 Bxd5 cxd5 25 Rd4 was H.Hamdouchi-S.Berndt, Fuegen 2006. This should be a draw, but White's position is a little more pleasant and he in fact managed to win.

b2) 20 Qf6 Bxa2 21 h4!? Ra5 and now:

b21) 22 b3 Bxb3! 23 cxb3 Qxb3 24 Qb2 Rc5+ 25 Bc2 Qe3+ 26 Rd2 Rd8 27 Rhd1 a5!?, as given by Ward leaves White tied up, while 27...Rb5!? 28 Qa2 Rdd5 also looks good.

b22) 22 h4 Qe3+ 23 Rd2 Bb3!? 24 cxb3 Ra1+ 25 Bb1 Rxb1+ 26 Kxb1 Qxd2 27 h6 Qd3+ 28 Kc1 Qe3+ 29 Kc2 Qe2+ 30 Kc1 1/2-1/2 was D.Eggleston-C.Ward, Halifax (rapid) 2006.

b23) 22 Rhe1!? Rb8 (22...Be6 23 b3 Rd5 24 g4 Qd8 25 Qxd8 Rfxd8 26 Kb2 left White

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

a little better in J.Smeets-H.Asauskas, Warsaw 2005) was G.Souleidis-P.Carlssohn, Soller 2006. Now 23 b3!? Bxb3 24 cxb3 Qxb3 25 Bc2 Qa3+ 26 Kd2 Rc5 27 Rb1 Qa5+ 28 Ke3 Re8+ 29 Be4 Rc2 would be rather unclear.

### 19...Rfd8 (Diagram 44)

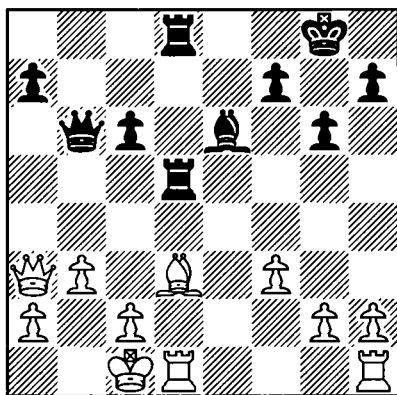


Diagram 44 (W)

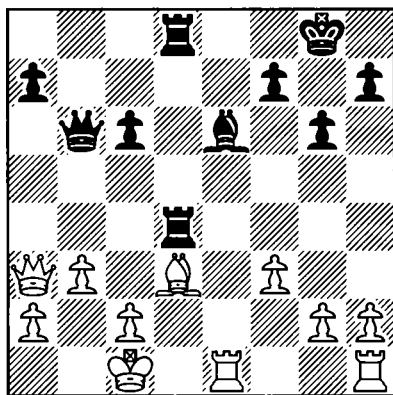


Diagram 45 (W)

### 20 Rde1!



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This move was previously considered to be dubious, but is now the main line. The d3-bishop keeps the d-file closed and White avoids certain tactical problems. In fact it is not easy to suggest anything better, as both 20 Rhe1 and 20 h4 are well met by 20...Bf5!.

### 20...Rd4

This looks better than the alternatives:

a) 20...Ra5 21 Qb2 c5 and now:

a1) 22 Be4?! c4 23 g4 Rc8 24 bxc4? (White had to try 24 Kb1, but Black still has good play) 24...Qd6 and Black had a strong attack in R.Antoniewski-E.Dearing, Menorca 1996.

a2) 22 Re2! c4 23 Bxc4 Bxc4 24 bxc4 Qc6 gives Black sufficient compensation for the pawns.

a3) 22 Re4!? is a good try: 22...c4 23 Bxc4 Bxc4 24 Rxc4 (24 bxc4!? was suggested in *Informant*) 24...Qe3+ (after 24...Qf2 25 Qc3 Rxa2 26 Rc8 Rxc8 27 Qxc8+ Kg7 28 Qc3+

Kh6 29 Qd2+ Qxd2+ 30 Kxd2 White was up a good pawn in A.Pavlidis-A.Xylogiannopoulos, Thessaloniki 2010; clearly Pavlidis learned something from his loss to Volokitin – see below) 25 Kb1 Rad5 26 a4! Qe2 27 g3 (27 g4! Qxf3 28 Re1 looks like an improvement after 28...Qg2 29 Re7 or 28...Rd2 29 h4) 27...Qxf3 28 Re1 Qg2 (28...Rd2!?) 29 Qc3 Qxh2 30 Rc8 Rxc8 31 Qxc8+ Kg7 32 Qc3+ Kh6 33 Kb2 was E.Alekseev-Z.Stanojoski, Novi Sad 2009. White's safer king and more effective pawn majority gives him the better chances.

b) 20...c5 21 Bc4 Rd2 22 Bxe6 fxe6 and here:

b2) 23 Rd1 Rxd1+ 24 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 25 Kxd1 c4! holds the balance and 26 Qe7 Qg1+ ½-½ was S.Rublevsky-V.Gashimov, Poikovsky 2009.

b1) 23 g4 c4! gives Black sufficient play: for example, 24 bxc4?! Qd4 25 Qb2 Qf4! 26 Kb1 Rb8.

b3) 23 g3! is a subtle improvement; White controls the f4-square. Here 23...Rf2 (23...c4!? 24 bxc4 Qd4 25 Qb2 Qxc4 26 Qb3 Qxb3 27 axb3 Rf2 was suggested by Jones, but Black still faces an uphill struggle) 24 Rd1 Rd4 (24...Rxd1+ 25 Rxd1 Rxf3 26 Qa4! is good for White) 25 f4 Qd6 (after 25...a6 26 Rxd4 cxd4 27 Qa4 Qc7 28 Qc4 Qxc4 29 bxc4 Black did manage to draw in A.Barnsley-J.Simmelinck, correspondence 2007, but this is not much fun; Jones suggest the similar 25...a5) 26 Qa5! (to stop ...Rdd2) 26...Rxh2 27 Qxa7 was good for White in A.Volokitin-A.Pavlidis, Rijeka 2010. Now the h-file is open, so 27...Rdd2 is not so dangerous: for example, 28 Rxh2 (Jones suggests the subtle 28 Qa8+ Kf7 29 Qb7+ Kf6 30 Rxh2 Rxd1+ 31 Kb2 Qd4+ 32 Ka3 when the b4-square is covered and White remains a pawn up) 28...Rxd1+ 29 Kb2 Qd4+ 30 c3 Rd2+ 31 Ka3 Qxc3 32 Qxh7+ Kf8 33 Qh8+ leaves White a pawn up in a rook ending, although Black retains certain drawing chances.

Returning to 20...Rd4 (**Diagram 45**):

## 21 Re5

Also possible is 21 h4 c5 (after 21...Qc7 22 h5 g5 23 Qc5 Qf4+ 24 Kb1 h6 25 Re4 Rxe4 the game K.Sugar-G.Csvila, Hungarian League 2009, was agreed drawn, but White has an extra pawn and the better position after 26 Bxe4) 22 Qa6 Qc7 23 Rxe6!? (not 23 h5 c4 when Black's attack is much stronger) 23...fxe6 24 Qxe6+ Qf7 when Black should hold the balance.

## 21...R8d5 (Diagram 46) 22 Rhe1!?

White continues developing. Retreating with 22 Re2 has been more popular, but it looks funny. Here 22...Qd8! continues Black's plan of amassing his forces in the centre when White has:

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

a) 23 Bc4?? Rd1+ 24 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 25 Kb2 Qd4+ 26 c3 Rd2+ 27 Rxd2 Qxd2+ 28 Ka1 Bf5 leads to mate.

b) 23 Qb2!? a5 24 Qc3 a4 25 Bc4 Rd1+ 26 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 27 Kb2 Bxc4 28 Qxc4 Qf6+ 29 c3 axb3 and now rather than 30 axb3 Qg5 with counterplay, Jones suggests 30 a4. White has a passed a-pawn, but his king is also a bit exposed.

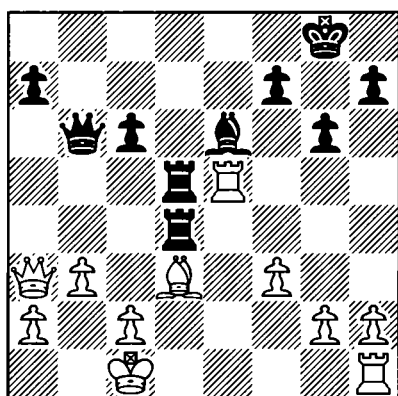


Diagram 46 (W)

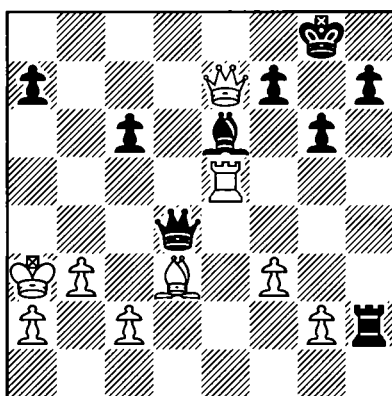


Diagram 47 (W)

c) 23 Rhe1 a5 24 Re4 a4 (after 24...Qg5+ 25 Kb1 Qxg2 26 Rxd4 Rxd4 27 Qxa5 Qxf3 28 Qc3 the passed a-pawn is dangerous) 25 Rxd4 Rxd4 26 Re2 Qa5 (Jones suggests the more convincing 26...Qg5+! when 27 Kb1 Qd8! threatens ...Rxd3 and 27 Kd1 Qa5 28 Re4 Qc3 29 Rxd4 Qxd4 30 Qxa4 Qg1+ 31 Kd2 Qxg2+ 32 Kc1 Qxh2 gives Black counterplay with his passed h-pawn) 27 Kb1 Qc3 28 Qb2 Qc5 29 g4 a3 30 Qc1 Rd8 was Wang Hao-A.Timofeev, Ningbo 2010. Black managed to stay active enough to hold a draw.

### 22...Rxe5 23 Rxe5 Rh4?!

This leads to trouble. Instead 23...Rd5 24 Re4 (after 24 Rxd5 Bxd5 Black's queen will become active) 24...Qg1+ 25 Kb2 Qf2 26 Re2 Qd4+ 27 Kb1 Qg1+ 28 Qc1 Qxh2 29 Qe3 White is only a little better according to Jones.

### 24 Qe7!

White attacks Black's rook and prepares a thematic attack.

### 24...Qg1+ 25 Kb2 Qd4+

Instead 25...Rxh2 26 Rxe6! Qd4+ (26...fxe6 27 Bc4 Qd4+ 28 Ka3 leads back to the game) 27 Ka3 Rh5 (27...fxe6 28 Bc4 again transposes to the game) 28 Bc4 Ra5+ 29

Kb4 Rb5+ (Black is out of useful checks after 29...Qb6+ 30 Kc3) 30 Ka4 fxe6 31 c3! Qf4 32 g3! drives the black queen off the fourth rank.

### 26 Ka3 Rxh2? (Diagram 47)

Necessary was 26...Qxe5 27 Qxh4, although White will be up a pawn for nothing.

27 Rxe6!



**TIP: This thematic sacrifice is a key idea and here it works even with very limited material remaining.**

27...fxe6 28 Bc4 Qf4 29 Bxe6+ Kh8 30 g3!

But not 30 Bf7? Kg7!.

30...Qxf3

Instead 30...Qc1+ 31 Ka4 does not help.

31 Bf7! 1-0

Black loses his queen after 31...Kg7 32 Bd5+ and he gets mated after 31...h5 32 Qf8+ Kh7 33 Qg8+ Kh6 34 Qxg6.

## Conclusion

The pawn grab with 12 Nxd5 is not very dangerous for Black if he knows his stuff. This line may still be useful against an unprepared opponent, but most white players prefer to avoid systems where one mistake can prove fatal. After 12 Bd4, the main continuation 12...e5 is not doing so well. White players have learned how to consolidate their positions and go about working on Black's structural defects. However, the lines with 12...Bxd4 and 12...Nxc3 are both looking quite solid. The advantage to these lines is also the problem – the simplification may make Black's problems easier to handle, but the relatively straightforward play also means White can hope to squeeze a little something without taking serious risks.

# Chapter Seven

## 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1 (Diagram 1)

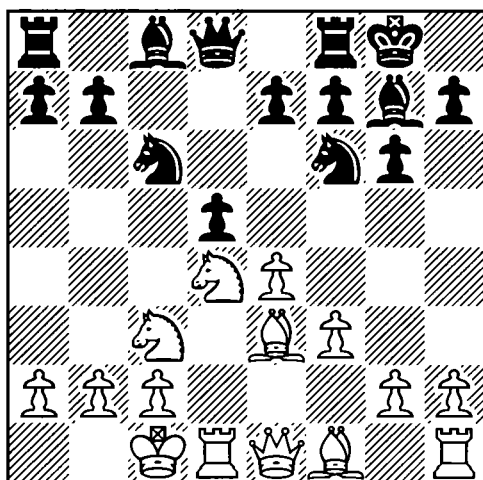


Diagram 1 (B)

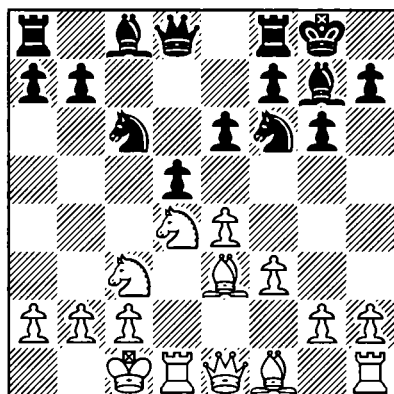
White maintains the tension and clears the d-file for his rook. Although this move avoids the body of theory surrounding 10 exd5, it has remained fairly popular



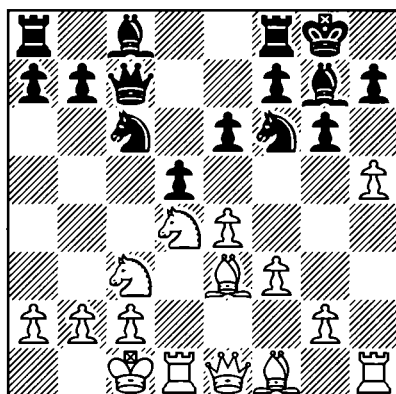
since being introduced by Dvoirys in 1987 and has built up some theory of its own. Here 10...e6 remains popular and is covered in Game 32, but Black's main move is the logical 10...e5, which is examined in Games 33 and 34.

*Game 32*  
**L.Nisipeanu-A.Timofeev**  
 Kallithea 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1 e6 (Diagram 2)**



**Diagram 2 (W)**



**Diagram 3 (B)**

With this move Black also indicates that he is willing to maintain the tension.

**11 h4**

This is the most direct. Practice has shown that after 11 g4 Black can change gear and play 11...e5! because White's g4 advance suddenly gives him additional opportunities. For example, 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 Bg5 Bb7! 15 Qxe5 h6 16 Bh4 g5 17 Be1 and now Black has 17...Nxg4!.

**11...Qc7**

The queen gets off the d-file and fights for squares on the h2-b8 diagonal.

**12 h5 (Diagram 3)**

White has an alternative in 12 exd5, but after 12...Nxd5 (instead 12...exd5 keeps pieces on the board, but I think White has chances of a real advantage here, espe-

cially with 13 g4!) 13 Nxd5 exd5 14 Qd2 Re8 15 h5 Rxe3 16 Qxe3 Bxd4 (worse is 16...Nxd4 17 Qe8+! Bf8 18 Rxd4 Bf5 19 Qa4) 17 Rxd4 Nxd4 18 Qxd4 Bf5 19 Bd3 Bxd3 20 Qxd3 Qe5 Black should hold without much trouble. This line is not very inspiring for either colour.

### **12...Nxb5**

Black has an interesting alternative in the rare 12...Nxd4!? 13 Bxd4 e5. After 14 Nb5 Qe7 (not 14...Qb8 15 Bc5! when 16 Bd6 is a threat) 15 Bc3! (also possible is the untried 15 exd5!? Nxd5 16 Bxa7 Be6 when Black has some compensation) 15...Nxb5 16 Bb4 (after 16 exd5 Black should play 16...a6!) 16...Qg5+ 17 Kb1 (or 17 Bd2 Qd8) 17...d4! 18 Bxf8 Bxf8 Black has good compensation for the exchange.

### **13 g4**

There is a major alternative in 13 exd5 exd5 and then:

a) 14 Nxd5 Qe5 15 Bc4 Re8 16 c3 was considered to be problematic by Dearing, but after 16...Na5! Black is doing well: for example, 17 Rh4 (17 Bb5 Qxd5 18 Bxe8 Qxa2 gives Black good counterplay) 17...Nf6 (or 17...Nxc4!? 18 Re4 Qxe4 19 fxe4 Rxe4 with excellent compensation for the queen) 18 Nxf6+ Bxf6! 19 Re4 Nxc4 20 Bd2 (Black is winning material after 20 Rxe5 Rxe5) 20...Bf5 21 Rxe5 Nxe5 gives Black a strong initiative.

b) 14 Ndb5 Qg3 15 Bf2 (15 Nxd5 Be6 16 Nbc7 Bxd5 17 Nxd5 Rad8 looks fairly level) 15...Qf4+ 16 Be3 and now Black can repeat moves with 16...Qg3 or play the somewhat speculative 16...Qf6 and then:

b1) 17 Nc7?! d4 18 Nxa8 dxc3 was M.Petrov-M.Golubev, Bucharest 2005. Here White should have played 19 Qxc3 Qxc3 20 bxc3 Ng3 21 Rg1 with approximately equal chances. However, 18...dxe3! looks very good: for example, 19 Qxe3 (if 19 Nc7 e2!) 19...Ng3 20 Rg1 Nf5 and with ideas like ...Nb4 and ...Bh6, Black has more than enough for the exchange.

b2) 17 Rxd5 is more testing: 17...Nf4 (this ends up losing time, but it is difficult to find a satisfactory alternative) 18 Rd6 Be6 19 Qd2 Nh5 was M.Adams-V.Topalov, Wijk aan Zee 1996. Now 20 Nc7 Ng3 21 Nxe6 fxe6 22 Bc4! Rfe8 23 Re1 would give White a big advantage.

Returning to 13 g4 (**Diagram 4**):

### **13...Nxd4**

Black has also tried 13...Ng3. After 14 Ndb5 Qb8 15 Rh3 Nxf1 16 Qxf1 a6 17 Nd4 White is down a pawn, but he has a big development lead and obvious possibilities on the h-file.

### **14 Bxd4 Bxd4 15 Rxd4 (Diagram 5) 15...Qe5**

This move looks a bit suspicious to me. It is natural to bring the queen to help defend the kingside with gain of tempo, but now White obtains a serious initiative. I consider the alternatives to be more reliable:

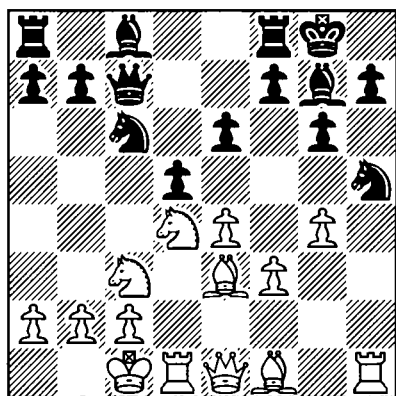


Diagram 4 (B)

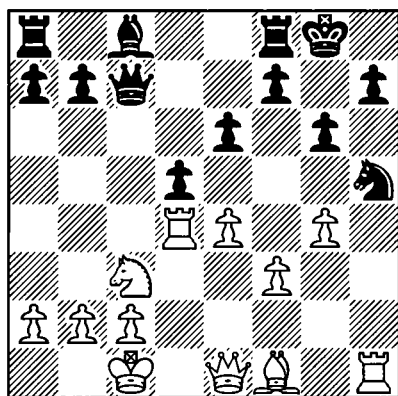


Diagram 5 (B)

a) 15...Ng3 is natural and looks fine. After 16 Rh3 (instead 16 Rg1?! leads to problems for White after 16...Qb6! 17 Qf2 e5 18 Rd2 Qxf2 19 Rxf2 d4! when Black is clearly better in the ending) 16...Nxf1 (another idea is 16...Qe5!? 17 Rd2 d4 18 Ne2 Nxf1 19 Qxf1 f5 with counterplay in S.Teichmeister-J.Jedrzejczak, correspondence 2000) White has:

a1) 17 exd5 could be simply met by 17...Rd8 18 Qxf1 exd5, while Black could also try 17...e5 18 Rd1 f5 or even the immediate 17...f5!?

a2) 17 Qxf1 dxe4 18 Nxe4 f5! 19 gxf5 (19 Ng5 Qg7! hits the d4-rook while preparing ...h6) 19...e5! 20 Rc4 Qe7 21 f6 Bxh3 22 Qxh3 Rxf6 23 Nxf6+ Qxf6 24 Rc8+ Rxc8 25 Qxc8+ Kg7 1/2-1/2 was C.Kinkelin-J.Tay, correspondence 1999.

b) 15...Qf4+ and now:

b1) 16 Rd2 Ng3 17 Rh3 d4 gives Black good play following 18 Nb5 (after 18 Qxg3 Qxg3 19 Rxg3 dxc3 20 bxc3 e5 Black is doing well in the ending) and here:

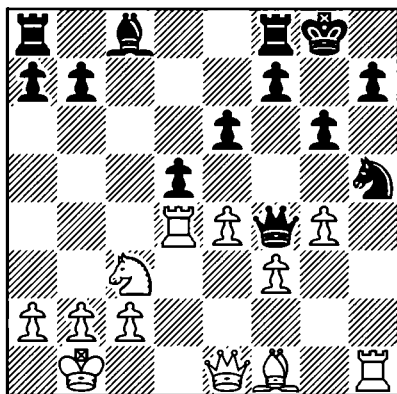
b11) 18...a6 19 Qxg3! (worse is 19 Nxd4?! Nxf1 20 Qxf1 Rd8! 21 Nb3 e5 which gave Black an excellent position in V.Spasov-K.Georgiev, Bulgaria 1995) 19...Qxg3 20 Rxg3 axb5 21 Rxd4 Rxa2 22 Bxb5 is level.

b12) 18...Nxf1 looks like a more clever move order, although White can still draw with 19 Qxf1 a6 20 Qh1! (20 Nxd4?! Rd8 is Spasov-Georgiev, above) 20...axb5 21

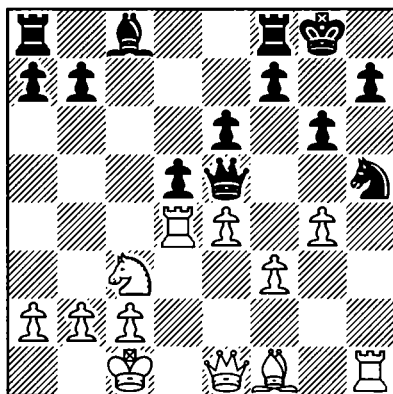
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Rxh7 Rxa2 22 Kb1! for example, 22...Rxb2+ (not 22...Ra4? 23 Rdh2) 23 Kxb2 Qxd2 24 Rh8+ Kg7 25 Qh7+ Kf6 26 Qh4+ Ke5 27 Qg3+ with perpetual check.

b2) 16 Kb1 (**Diagram 6**) is more interesting.



**Diagram 6 (B)**



**Diagram 7 (W)**

Now:

b21) 16...Qxf3 is risky after 17 Qh4 (instead 17 Be2 Qf6 18 Rd3 Nf4 was good for Black in R.Mainka-P.Bobras, Koszalin 1999) 17...Qf6 18 gxh5 Qxd4 19 hxg6 h6 20 Qxh6 Qg7 21 gxf7+ Rxf7 and now 22 Qh2 Qh7 23 Qg3+ Rg7 24 Qf3 Rf7 25 Rg1+ Rg7 26 Rxg7+ Qxg7 27 exd5 Bd7 looks okay for Black, but perhaps 22 Qd2!? could cause some problems.

b22) 16...Ng3 leads to a rather passive position after 17 Ne2 (the ambitious 17 Rh3 Nxf1 18 Qxf1 dxe4 19 Nxe4!? looks good) 17...Nxe2 18 Bxe2 Qf6 19 Qg1 dxe4 20 Qh2 Qg7 21 Rxe4 when White had sufficient play for the pawn in M.Fritz-A.Dikmen, correspondence 1998.

b23) 16...Nf6!? is rare, but looks best. White has compensation for the pawn, but perhaps no more than that. After 17 Be2 Kg7 18 Qg1 e5! 19 Nxd5 Nxd5 20 Rxd5 Be6 Black was fully equal in D.Overton-W.Taylor, correspondence 1996.

Returning to 15...Qe5 (**Diagram 7**):

**16 Qd2 Ng3 17 Rg1 dxe4**

Instead 17...Nxf1 18 Rxf1 dxe4 19 f4 transposes to the next note.

**18 f4! e3**

With this move Black hopes to simplify the position. Instead 18...Nxf1 19 Rxf1 Qg7

20 g5 e5 21 Rd6 e3 22 Qxe3 exf4 23 Qxf4 Bh3 24 Rf2 Rae8 25 Nd5 Re1+ 26 Kd2 gave White a strong initiative in R.Mainka-B.Alterman, London 1994.

### 19 fxe5

White is able to keep some pressure in the endgame. Instead 19 Qd3 e2! was Black's idea.

### 19...exd2+ 20 Rxd2 Nxf1 21 Rxf1 (Diagram 8)

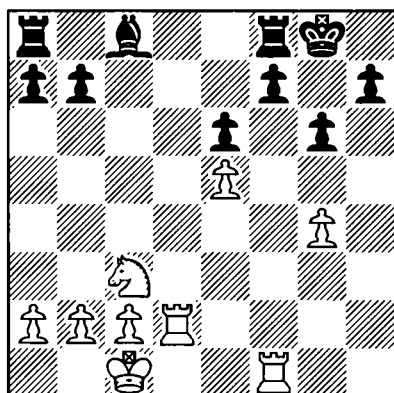


Diagram 8 (B)

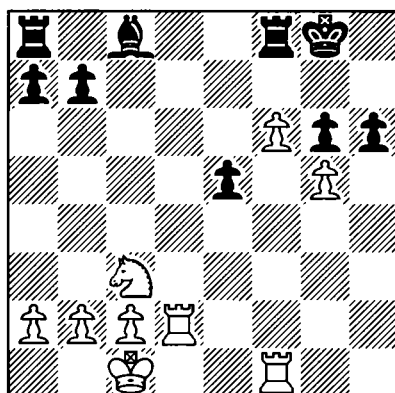


Diagram 9 (W)

White's rooks are active and he is ready to play Ne4, eyeing the d6- and f6-squares.

### 21...f5?

This panicky move should fail. Previously Black had tried 21...b6 22 Ne4 h6 23 Nd6 a5 to prepare to defend f7. Then 24 Rh2 Kg7 25 g5 h5 26 Rhf2 Ra7 27 Rf4 was T.Nedev-P.Drenchev, Illkirch-Graffenstaden 2004. Computers like Black here (probably because of the protected passed h-pawn), but White certainly has some advantage as all of his pieces are better positioned. White will play c4, Kd2-c3, and gradually advance his queenside pawns.

### 22 exf6 e5 23 g5 h6 (Diagram 9)



**WARNING:** Development and king safety count, even in the endgame! Here Black is able to break up White's pawn chain, but his king is too vulnerable for this to work.

### 24 Nd5?!

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Instead White should play 24 Rh1! hxg5 (better is 24...h5, but then 25 Ne4 leaves White with a big advantage) 25 Rdh2 when White is winning. One possibility given by Rogozenko is 25...Kf7 26 Rh7+ Ke6 27 Re7+ Kf5 28 Kd2! with a winning attack against the lone black king.

### **24...hxg5 25 Ne7+**

Instead 25 Rh2 Bf5 26 Rfh1 Kf7 27 Rh7+ Ke6 28 Nc7+ Kxf6 29 Nxa8 Rxa8 30 Rxb7 should still win, although Black at least has some counterplay with 30...g4.

### **25...Kf7 26 Nxc8**

White has to take the bishop, because 26 Re2?! Bh3 can only be better for Black.

### **26...Raxc8 27 Rd7+ Ke6 28 Re7+ Kd6 29 Rd1+**

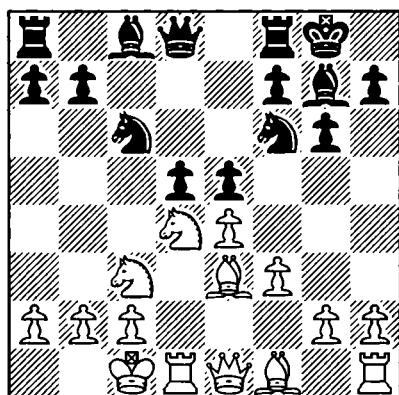
Things are not so simple for White now. Rogozenko gives 29 Rxb7 Rc7 30 Rxc7 Kxc7 31 f7 Kd7 32 Rf6 Ke7 33 Rxc7 Rxf7 34 Rxc7 Ke6 when the e-pawn gives Black counterplay. Nisipeanu decides that his chances to win are behind him and so forces a draw.

### **29...Kc6 30 Re6+ Kc7 31 Re7+ Kc6 32 Re6+ Kc7 33 Re7+ Kc6 34 Re6+ ½-½**

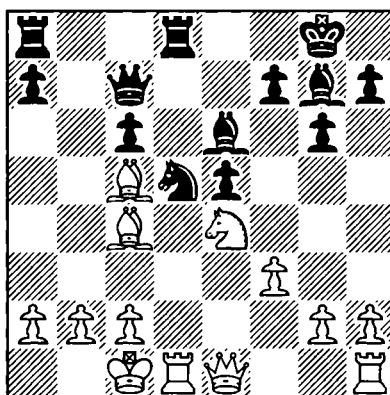
## *Game 33*

**P.Bobras-C.Koepke**  
Aghios Kirykos 2009

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1 e5 (Diagram 10)**



**Diagram 10 (W)**



**Diagram 11 (W)**

This logical continuation is the most common.

### **11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 Nxd5**

This leads to positions similar to those found in Game 28. There we saw that despite the line's long history, Black faced certain problems. Here Black gets an improved version, as we shall see. The alternative 12...exd5 is considered in the next game.

### **13 Bc4 Be6 14 Ne4 Qc7 15 Bc5 Rfd8 (Diagram 11)**

This is the main position. Compared to Game 28, Black has saved some time because he has been able to play his king rook to d8 in one move, while White has spent a tempo putting his queen on e1.

### **16 g4**

White has the familiar idea of pushing his g- and h-pawns. There are some alternatives:

a) 16 Ng5?! Bh6! 17 Qh4 Kg7! gives Black a good position. After 18 Kb1 (instead 18 Bxd5 Bxg5+ 19 Qxg5 f6 20 Qe3 cxd5 is much better for Black, as shown in several games) 18...Nc3+! 19 bxc3 Bxc4 20 Qxc4 Bxg5 Black is obviously better.

b) 16 Qh4 h6 17 g4 has been played a bit, but after 17...Rd7 (reasonable alternatives are 17...Rab8 and 17...a5) 18 g5 h5 it is not clear what White's queen is doing on h4.

c) 16 h4!? constitutes an interesting move order. After 16...h6 (also possible is 16...Nf4!? as in the main game) 17 h5 (instead 17 g4 is the note to Black's 16th, below) 17...f5 (White had a sturdy advantage after 17...g5 18 g4 Rd7 19 Rh2 Rad8 20 Rhd2 in S.Feller-R.Loetscher, Szeged 2007) and now:

c1) 18 hxg6!? fxe4 19 Qxe4 Re8 20 g3 Nf6 21 Bxe6+ Rxe6 was unclear in D.Kryakvin-A.Zakharov, Belorechensk 2009.

c2) 18 Nf2 Nf4 19 Bxe6+ Nxe6 20 Bb4 g5 21 Bc3 Rxd1+ 22 Nxd1 Nf4 23 Ne3 Qf7 24 Kb1 Nd5 gave Black a good position in E.Inarkiev-T.Radjabov, Elista 2008.

### **16...Nf4**

Also important is 16...h6 17 h4 (**Diagram 12**) when Black has:

a) 17...f5 18 gxf5 gxf5 19 Ng3 Qf7 20 Qa5 has scored well for White, but the position is not so clear. After 20...Kh7 (20...Rd7!?) 21 Bb3 Bf6 22 Qa6 Qc7? 23 Nxf5 Bxf5 24 Bxd5 cxd5 25 Qxf6 Bxc2 26 Kxc2 Qxc5+ 27 Kb1 things had gone very wrong for Black in E.Matsuura-H.Delgado Ramos, Havana 2008.

b) 17...Rab8 and then:

b1) 18 g5 h5 19 Rh2 Qb7 20 b3 Nf4 21 Bxe6 Rxd1+ 22 Qxd1 Nxe6 23 Rd2 looked a

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little better for White in A.Berescu-N.Grigore, Eforie Nord 2008.

b2) 18 Ba3 Qb6 19 Bb3 Nf4 20 Rxd8+ Rxd8 21 Be7 Re8?! (better was 21...Rd4 with the idea 22 Bc5? Rxe4!, while 22 Nf6+ Bxf6 23 Bxf6 Bxb3 24 axb3 Rd5 looks tenable for Black according to Jones) 22 Bc5 Qa6 23 Kb1 Bd5 24 Be3 Ng2 25 Qf2 Nxe3 26 Qxe3 leaves Black without counterplay. After 26...Rb8 27 g5! Qb6 28 Qxb6! axb6 29 Rd1 hxg5 30 hxg5 Bxe4 31 fxe4 Rb7 32 Rd6 Rc7 33 Rxc6 White was up a healthy pawn in M.Panchanathan-Wang Puchen, Richardson 2011.

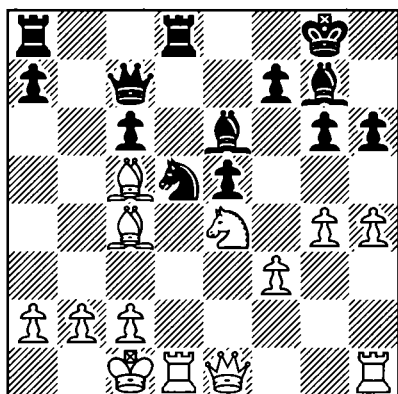


Diagram 12 (B)

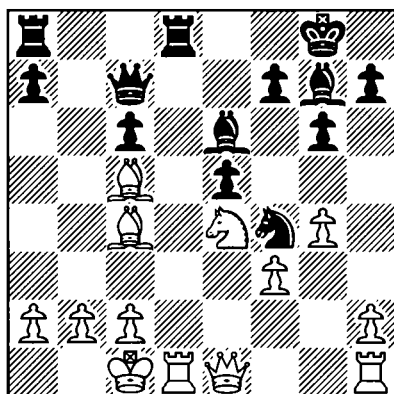


Diagram 13 (W)

c) 17...Nf4 is similar to the main game, but there are some differences after 18 Bxe6 (instead 18 Bd6 runs into 18...Rxd6!, just like it does in the note to White's 17th move, below) 18...Nxe6 (Black could consider 18...Rxd1+ 19 Qxd1 Nxe6 with the idea of ...Rd8) 19 Bd6 Qb6 20 g5 and now:

c1) 20...h5 21 Nf6+ Bxf6 22 gxf6 Nd4 23 Qxe5 Nf5 24 Bc5 Rxd1+ 25 Rxd1 Qa6 26 Kb1 Nxh4 27 b3 gave White an obvious advantage in B.Jaderholm-R.Dahlstroem, correspondence 2007, as Black's king is very uncomfortable.

c2) 20...Nd4 and now 21 Kb1 h5 was okay for Black in E.Liss-B.Alterman, Rishon Le Zion 1994. However, 21 h5! has gone unnoticed, probably because White lost the following game. Playing this way is, of course, very logical and it fully exploits the addition of the moves ...h6 and h4. After 21...Nf5 22 hxg6 fxg6 23 gxh6 Bxh6+ 24 Rxh6! Nxh6 25 Nf6+ (25 Qg3 is winning as well) 25...Kf7 26 Qxe5 Nf5 27 Ng4 Rxd6 White blundered with 28 Rh1?? Rg8 29 Qf4 Qd4 30 Ne5+ Ke6 and 0-1 in L.Durik-R.Dobias, Trnava 1994. Instead 28 Nh6+ Nxh6 29 Rxd6 would have won easily: for example, 29...Qg1+ 30 Rd1.



Returning to 16...Nf4 (**Diagram 13**):

### 17 Qc3!?

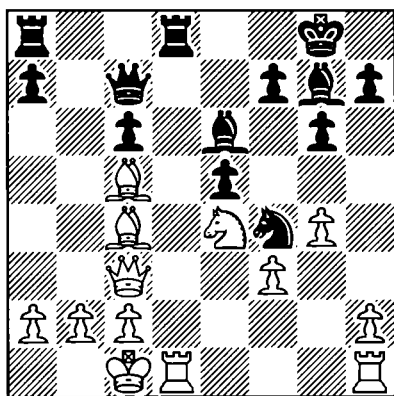
Instead 17 Bd6 fails to 17...Rxd6! which is a nice trap. After 18 Nxd6 Bd5 the d6-knight is in trouble: 19 Nb5 Qb6 20 Bxd5 cxd5 21 Nc3 was T.Shadrina-N.Pogonina, Vladimir 2005, and here 21...e4! looks the most convincing.

The main alternative is 17 Bxe6 which can be compared to the lines in variation 'c' above. Black has:

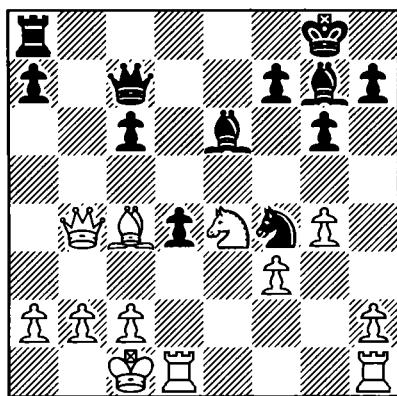
a) 17...Nxe6 18 Bd6 Qb6 19 Qc3 (here 19 g5 does not threaten to open lines, so Black can play 19...Nd4 immediately) 19...Nd4 20 Kb1 (20 Rhe1 is another option) 20...Rd7 (20...Nb5 21 Qb3 Nxd6 22 Nxd6 Qc7 23 Qb7 Qxb7 24 Nxb7 Rd5 25 c4 Rd4 26 Rxd4 exd4 27 Re1 gave White a better ending in V.Bologan-D.Rogozenko, Kishinev 1998) 21 Rd3 Qb5!? 22 a4 (Rogozenko recommends 22 g5! Rad8 23 a4! Qd5 24 Ba3 when White may hold a small edge) 22...Qd5 23 Ba3 f5! 24 gxf5 gxf5 25 Nc5 e4! 26 Nxd7 exd3 27 Qxd3 Rd8! (better than 27...Qxd7 28 c3) 28 Nc5 Nxf3 29 Qxd5+ Rxd5 30 Nd3 Ne5 was T.Nedev-D.Rogozenko, Skopje 2002. Black's f-pawn gives him good play.

b) 17...Rxd1+ 18 Qxd1 Nxe6 19 Be3 (19 Qd6 Qxd6 20 Bxd6 Nd4 21 Rf1 f5 is fine for Black) 19...Rb8 20 Qd3 Nd4 21 Rf1 Qb6 22 b3 Qa5 23 Kb1 Nb5 24 Bc1 f5 (24...Rd8 is safer) 25 gxf5 gxf5 26 Rg1! fxe4 27 Qd7 Nc3+ 28 Kb2 Qxa2+ 29 Kxc3 Qa1+ and here White allowed a draw with 30 Kc4 Qa6+ 31 Kc3 Qa1+ 32 Kc4 Qa6+ 33 Kc3 Qa1+ 34 Kc4 in E.Matsuura-R.Robson, Boca Raton 2008. Instead 30 Kd2 Qd4+ 31 Qxd4 exd4 32 fxe4 would have favoured White because Black's pawns are the more vulnerable.

Returning to 17 Qc3 (**Diagram 14**):



**Diagram 14 (B)**



**Diagram 15 (B)**

### **17...Rd4!?**

This is an enterprising sacrifice, but is hardly forced. Some alternatives:

a) 17...Bxc4 18 Qxc4 Rd5 has been rarely played but looks fine. In Game 28 we saw that White tried to prevent Black from reaching this kind of piece arrangement.

b) 17...Bd5 also looks fine. After 18 Kb1 (instead 18 g5 Ne6 19 Be3 Nd4 20 Kb1 Bxc4 21 Qxc4 Nxf3 22 Rdf1 Nd4 23 h4 was M.Panchanathan-V.Gashimov, Nakhchivan 2003; White has some compensation for the pawn, but no more than that) 18...Rd7 19 Bf2 h6 20 Bh4 Re8 21 a3 Bxe4 22 fxe4 Rd4 gave Black sufficient play in P.Svidler-B.Alterman, Bad Homburg 1997.

c) 17...Rd5!? 18 Kb1 (not 18 Bxd5? Ne2+) 18...Rad8 is another way to offer the exchange. White has:

c1) 19 Bxd5 cxd5 20 Be3 Qe7 21 Qc5 Qb7 was Xie Jun-E.Gufeld, Kuala Lumpur 1994, which left Black with some counterplay for the exchange.

c2) 19 Rde1! h6 (19...R5d7!?) 20 Be3 was J.Gdanski-A.Fedorov, Ohrid 2001. Here Black should probably just play 20...R5d7 with a reasonable position.

### **18 Bxd4 exd4 19 Qb4 (Diagram 15)**

This is the only good move. Instead 19 Rxd4?? loses to 19...Bxc4 20 Qxc4 Bxd4 21 Qxd4 Ne2+, while 19 Qb3? Rb8 20 Qa4 d3 21 c3 Ne2+ 22 Kb1 Bxc3! favours Black.

### **19...c5!**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT: This is stronger than 19...d3?! 20 Bxe6 Ne2+ (Black does not have enough for the exchange after 20...Nxe6 21 c3 Qf4+ 22 Nd2) 21 Kb1 Rb8 because of 22 Bxf7+!**

After 22...Kh8 (losing is 22...Kxf7 23 Qc4+ Kf8 24 c3), 23 Qxb8+ Qxb8 24 c3 Nxc3+ 25 Nxc3 Bxc3 26 Bb3 Bf6 27 Rxd3 Qe5 28 Rd2 Qe3 gave Black a little bit of counterplay in P.Svidler-T.Radjabov, Sochi 2008, but 23 Qb3! Rxb3 24 Bxb3 dxc2+ 25 Bxc2 would have been cleaner.

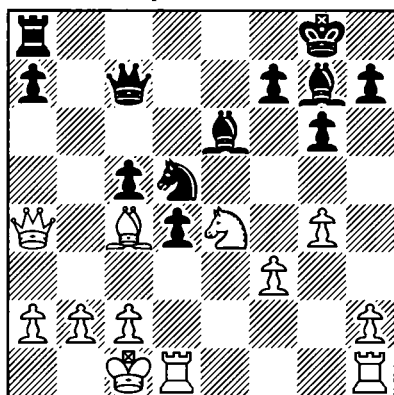
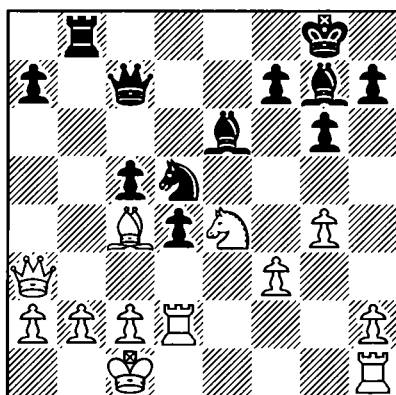
### **20 Qa4**

Instead 20 Nxc5? Rb8! 21 Nxe6 Nxe6 22 Qa4 d3 would give White big problems:

a) 23 c3 Nc5! 24 Qa3 Qf4+ wins the c4-bishop.

b) 23 b3 Qf4+! 24 Rd2 (24 Kb1 Qd4 leads to mate) 24...Qe5 and Black will win the h1-rook, at the very least.

c) 23 Bb3 dxc2 24 Rd5 (or 24 Rd2 Bh6) 24...Nf4 25 Rd2 Ne2+! 26 Rxe2 Bh6+ and Black wins.

**20...Nd5 (Diagram 16)****Diagram 16 (W)****Diagram 17 (B)**

Now Black threatens ...Nb6.

**21 Qa3**

Alternatives:

a) 21 Qa6?! Rb8 22 Bxd5 Bxd5 23 Rhe1 Qf4+ 24 Nd2 c4 when Black had a strong attack in L.Mooren-R.Salgado, correspondence 1996.

b) 21 Bxd5 is untried, but remains critical. After 21...Bxd5 22 Rhe1! (Black has good play after 22 g5 Bxe4 23 fxe4 c4) 22...Qxh2 (Black could consider 22...c4!?) Ftacnik gives 23 Qd7 Be6 24 Qd6 Qxd6 25 Nxd6 Rb8 with compensation for the exchange. Instead White could consider 23 Nxc5!? with the idea 23...Bxf3 24 Re8+.

**21...Rb8 22 Rd2 (Diagram 17)**

Instead 22 Bxd5 Bxd5 23 Qxc5 (now 23 Rhe1 is met by 23...d3! with an attack on b2) 23...Qb7! (23...Qxc5 24 Nxc5 Bxf3 is also possible) 24 g5 (24 b3? Rc8 gives Black a winning attack: for example, 25 Qa3 Bxe4 26 fxe4 Qxe4 27 Qb2 d3) 24...Bxe4 25 fxe4 Qxb2+ 26 Kd2 Qxa2 gave Black plenty of compensation for the exchange in M.Ozolin-S.Lykov, Izhevsk 2008.

**22...Rb4**

This is very natural, but White seems to be able to obtain some advantage after this. Black could consider 22...Nf4!? 23 Bxe6 Nxe6 with the idea of ...c4 or even 22...d3!? 23 cxd3 (after 23 c3 Nxc3! 24 Bxe6 Nxe4 Black is doing well after either 25 Bxf7+ Qxf7 26 fxe4 Bh6 or 25 fxe4 fxe6 26 Qxd3 Bh6) 23...Qf4 with counterplay.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

### 23 Bxd5

This is better than 23 b3 Nc3 24 Bxe6 Nxe4 25 fxe4 Bh6!.

### 23...Bxd5 (Diagram 18)

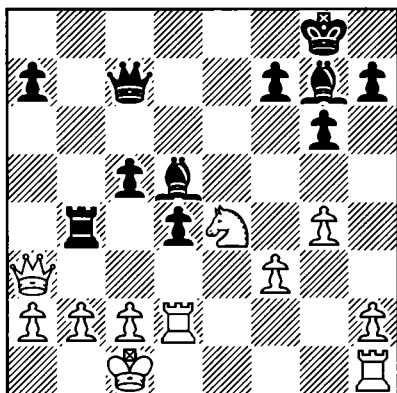


Diagram 18 (W)

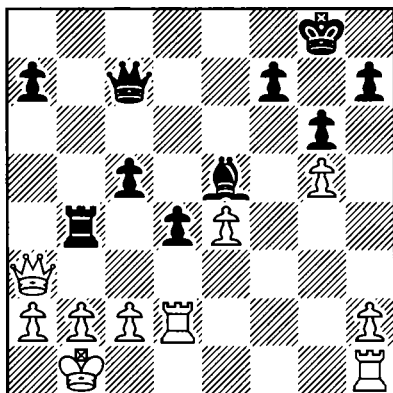


Diagram 19 (B)

### 24 g5

This forces a response from Black, but White could also play 24 h4 or 24 Kb1.

### 24...Bxe4

Black could also consider 24...f5 25 Nf6+ (if 25 gxf6 Bh6) 25...Bxf6 26 gxf6 Kf7 27 Re1 Kxf6, but White is still better after 28 Kb1, as Black has had to give up his dark-squared bishop and his king is somewhat exposed.

### 25 fxe4 Be5 26 Kb1 (Diagram 19)

Black has some compensation for the exchange, but the position has simplified and White is for choice.

### 26...Qb7

Instead 26...Bf4 27 Rg2 does not do much, but Black should try 26...Rb7 with the idea of ...c4.

### 27 Re1

White could take the f-file immediately with 27 Rf1!? because 27...Qxe4?! (27...c4 is better) 28 Qxa7 Qd5 29 Re2! threatens Rxe5 and gives Black serious problems.

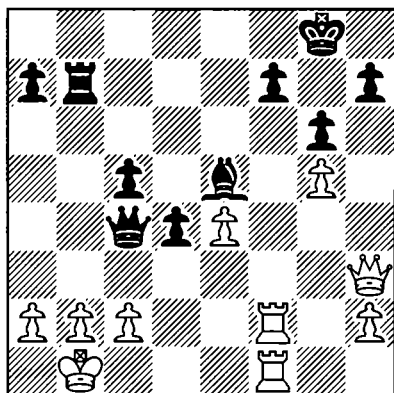
### 27...Qb5?!

Better was 27...c4.

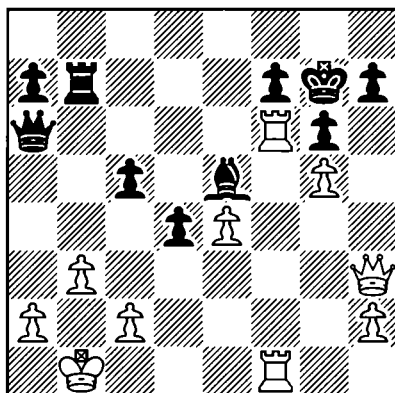
**28 Rf2!**

White seizes the initiative for good.

**28...Qc4 29 Ref1 Rb7 30 Qh3! (Diagram 20)**



**Diagram 20 (B)**



**Diagram 21 (B)**

White threatens Qc8+ and now the black king starts to feel the heat.

**30...Kg7**

This allows White to quickly drum up a mating attack, but after 30...Rc7 31 Qb3! White would be up a whole exchange for nothing in the ending.

**31 b3 Qa6 32 Rf6! (Diagram 21) 32...Qa3**

Instead 32...Bxf6 33 gxf6+ with the idea of Qc8 mate wins, while 32...Qb5 33 R1f3! with the idea of 34 Re6! fxe6 35 Qh6+ Kg8 36 Rf8 mate is also crushing.

**33 Qf3**

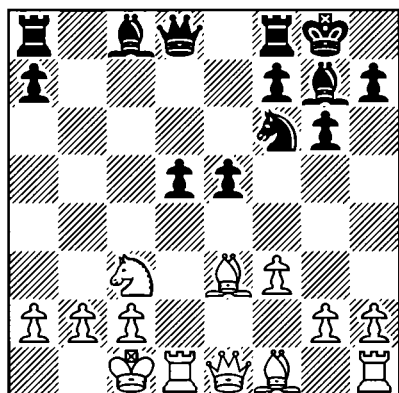
White could win even more quickly using the theme above: 33 Qh6+ Kg8 34 Rc6 (of course 34 Re6 Qa4 35 Rxe5 works too) 34...Rc7 35 Re6! Rc8 36 Rxf7 Kxf7 37 Rxe5 Rh8 38 Qh3 and Black will soon be mated.

**33...Bxf6 34 gxf6+ Kh8 35 Qh3 Rb8 36 Qh6 Rg8 37 Rf3 1-0**

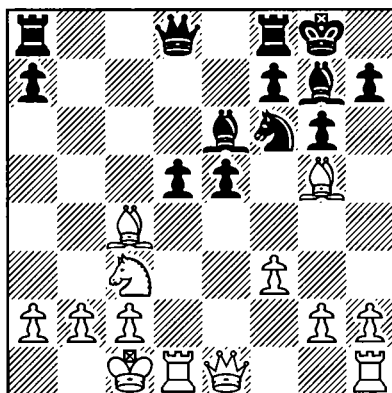
### Game 34 P.Leko-M.Carlsen 5th matchgame, Miskolc (rapid) 2008

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9**

**0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1 e5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 cxd5 (Diagram 22)**



**Diagram 22 (W)**



**Diagram 23 (B)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This move is not played very often compared to 12...Nxd5, but it looks quite reliable if Black does not mind working a bit for a draw.

### **13 Bg5**

This puts pressure on both of Black's centre pawns. Much worse is 13 Bc4?! d4.

### **13...Be6**

Black should avoid 13...Bb7 because of 14 Qxe5 h6 15 Bh4 g5 16 Be1 Ne4 17 Qf5!, but after the text 14 Qxe5 h6! is good for Black, as 15 Bh4 g5 16 Be1 Ne4 wins material.

### **14 Bc4 (Diagram 23) 14...Qc7**

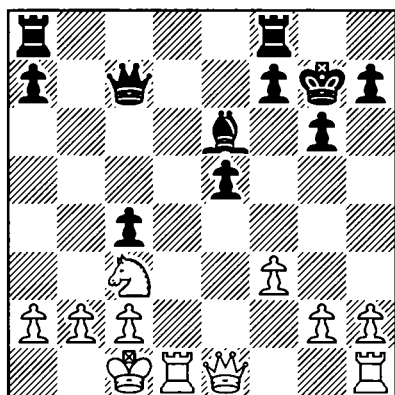
Black has also tried 14...Qb6!? 15 Bxf6 (Black has more than enough for the pawn after 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Bxd5 17 Rxd5 e4!) 15...Bxf6 16 Nxd5 (Black has reasonable compensation after 16 Bxd5 Rab8: for example, 17 b3 Rfc8 or 17 Bb3 a5) 16...Bxd5 17 Rxd5 e4 18 Rb5 Qc7 19 Qxe4 when it is questionable that Black has enough for the pawns.

### **15 Bxf6**

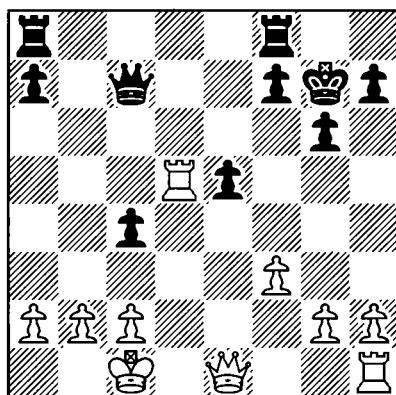
White plays for a small positional advantage. Instead 15 Bxd5 Nxd5 16 Nxd5 Bxd5 17 Rxd5 Qc4 entices the somewhat awkward move 18 Ra5 and it has been presumed that this is satisfactory for Black. This is not so clear, although Black looks to have enough play after 18...Rab8 (worse is 18...Rfc8 19 Qe4 Qc7 20 Rb5!) 19 b3

Qc7 20 Rd5 (20 c4!? is also possible, though White's position does look loose)  
20...Rfc8 21 Qd2 a5!? with the idea 22 Rxa5 e4!.

**15...dxc4 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 (Diagram 24)**



**Diagram 24 (W)**



**Diagram 25 (B)**

White's hopes for an advantage are based on his control of the d-file and his slightly better pawn structure. Black is very solid though and has the possibility of creating counterplay on the b-file.

### **17 Nd5**

Black's bishop is not a bad match for the white knight, so White decides to further simplify, hoping to keep an edge in a position with only the heavy pieces remaining. White has some other moves, but Black is more likely to get counterplay.

a) 17 Ne4 Rad8 18 Qc3 Bd5 (18...f6 looks fine too) 19 Rde1 Rfe8 20 f4 f6 (20...Qc6!?) 21 Re2 Bxe4 22 Rxe4 exf4 23 Rxc4 Qd6 24 Rc6 Qe7 25 Rc7 Rd7 26 Rxd7 Qxd7 27 Rd1 Qe6 was fine for Black in R.Mainka-A.Kalka, Dortmund 1999.

b) 17 h4 h5 18 Ne4 Rab8 (Black could also play 18...Rad8, as in variation 'a') 19 Qc3 Rb5 20 Nd6 Ra5 (20...Rc5 with the idea 21 f4 Qa5 looks fine) 21 a3 Rd8 22 b4 (22 f4!?) 22...Rd5 23 Rxd5 Bxd5 24 Qxe5+ Kh7 25 Qxd5 Rxd6 and now 26 Qg5?! c3 gave Black counterplay in S.Beshukov-K.Jedryczka, Polanica Zdroj 1999, but 26 Qc5! would give White a risk-free edge.

c) 17 Qe3 Rab8! (now this square is more appropriate, because 17...Rad8?! 18 Rxd8 Rxd8 19 Re1 f6 20 f4 would win a pawn) 18 Rhe1 (here 18 Nd5? is bad because of 18...Bxd5 19 Rxd5 Rxb2!, while 18 Ne4 Rb6! 19 Qc5?! Rc6 20 Qa3 Rb8 gave Black

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some initiative in J.Timman-J.Hodgson, Groningen 1996) 18...f6 19 Ne4 (19 f4 Qb7! 20 b3 cxb3 21 axb3 Qb4! gives Black a very strong attack: for example, 22 fxe5 Qa3+ 23 Kd2 Rbd8+ 24 Ke2 Bg4+) 19...Rb6 (19...Bf5 looks good too) 20 Nc5 Rc8 21 Nxe6+ Rxe6 22 Qc3 Rd6 23 Rxd6 Qxd6 ½-½ was M.Müller-S.Berndt, German League 1998.

### **17...Bxd5 18 Rxd5 (Diagram 25) 18...Rfe8**

With this move Black avoids opening up his second rank, but he should also consider 18...f6!? and then:

a) 19 Qc3 Rad8 20 Rhd1 Rxd5 21 Rxd5 e4 was drawn here in Y.Berthelot-G.Mohr, Paris 1993. If 22 fxe4 Qf4+ 23 Qd2 (or 23 Rd2 Rd8) 23...Qf1+ 24 Qd1 Qf4+ 25 Kb1 Qxe4 26 Rd7+ Rf7 the position is equal.

b) 19 Qd2 Rad8 20 Qa5 (or 20 Rd1 Rxd5 21 Qxd5 c3!) 20...Qb8! 21 Rhd1 Rxd5 22 Rxd5 e4 23 Rd7+ Rf7 24 Rxf7+ Kxf7 25 Qd5+ Kg7 26 Qxe4 Qxh2 and Black had enough play in F.Langheinrich-J.Zimmermann, Oberhof 1999.

c) 19 Qa5 is untried, but thematic and probably the best try for an edge: 19...Qb7!? (19...Rac8 20 Rhd1 Rf7 should be tenable too) 20 Rhd1 Rf7 21 Qc3 Rc8 and Black is very solid, although White's position remains preferable.

### **19 Qc3 Kg8**

Black could also exchange rooks with 19...Rad8 20 Rhd1 Rxd5 21 Rxd5 and only then play 21...Kg8. After 22 b3 (22 Qa5 Qe7 intending ...e4 looks okay now) 22...e4?! 23 Qxc4 Qxh2 24 Rd7 Qf4+ 25 Kb1 Qf5 26 Rd5 looks good for White: for example, 26...Qe6 (or 26...Qf4 27 Qa4! Re7 28 Qd4! and Black's king was uncomfortable in M.Bley-J.Diani, correspondence 2004) 27 Qxe4 Qxe4 28 fxe4 Rxe4 29 c4 with a clear advantage in the rook ending in T.Bakre-G.Hernandez, Roque Saenz Pena 1997. However, instead 22...Qb6!? would activate the queen on the g1-a7 diagonal and looks like a better try.

### **20 Qa5!?**

Black has enough counterplay after 20 Re1 e4 21 fxe4 Qxh2 or 20 Rhd1 e4 21 fxe4 Qf4+ 22 Kb1 Qxe4.

### **20...Qe7**

Instead both 20...Rac8 and 20...Qxa5 21 Rxa5 e4 were options.

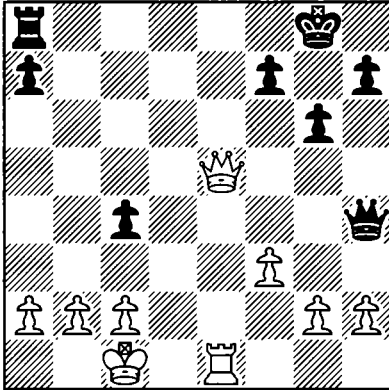
### **21 Re1 Qh4?!**

After this Black loses a pawn and is unable to generate enough play to compensate for it. Instead 21...Qg5+ 22 Qd2 Qf6 23 Re4 Rac8?! 24 c3 Qa6 25 a3 Qb6 26 Qe3 left White with a stable advantage in M.Parligras-R.Milu, Romania 1999, but

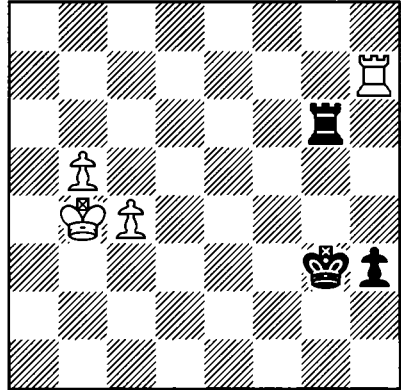


23...Qb6!?, taking the g1-a7 diagonal, looks like a better try.

**22 Rdx5 Rxe5 23 Qxe5 (Diagram 26)**



**Diagram 26 (B)**



**Diagram 27 (W)**

White has an extra pawn for nothing, but this was a rapid game and Carlsen manages to wiggle out.

**23...Rd8 24 h3 c3 25 Qxc3 Qg5+ 26 f4 Qxg2 27 b3 Qf2 28 Re4 Qg2 29 Rc4 Qd5 30 Kb2 Qf5 31 a4 h5 32 Qe3 a6 33 Rc5 Qf6+ 34 Qe5 Kg7 35 Qxf6+ Kxf6 36 Rc4?!**

Leko begins to drift. Both 36 Ra5 and 36 a5 look more purposeful.

**36...Kf5 37 b4 f6 38 Kc3 g5 39 fxg5 fxg5 40 Rc7 Rg8**

Instead 40...g4! should hold.

**41 Rh7 h4 42 b5 axb5 43 axb5 Kf4 44 Rd7 g4 45 hxg4 h3 46 Rh7 Kxg4 47 Kb4 Kg3 48 c4 Rg6 49 Ka5 Rg5 50 Kb4 Rg6 (Diagram 27) 51 Rxh3+?**

White could have won with 51 c5 Rg4+ 52 Ka5 Rh4 53 Rd7! h2 54 Rd1 h1Q 55 Rxh1 Rxh1 56 b6. Now Black manages to draw with a couple of accurate moves.

**51...Kxh3 52 c5 Rg4+! 53 Ka5 Rc4! 54 Kb6 Kg4 55 Kc6 Kf5 56 Kd5 Rc1 57 b6 Rd1+ 58 Kc6 Ke6 59 b7 Rb1 60 Kc7 Kd5 61 c6 Rb2 62 Kd7 Rb6 63 c7 Rxb7 64 Kd8 Rxc7 65 Kxc7 ½-½**

## Conclusion

10 Qe1 is not as popular as it used to be, but Black still does not have an easy time.

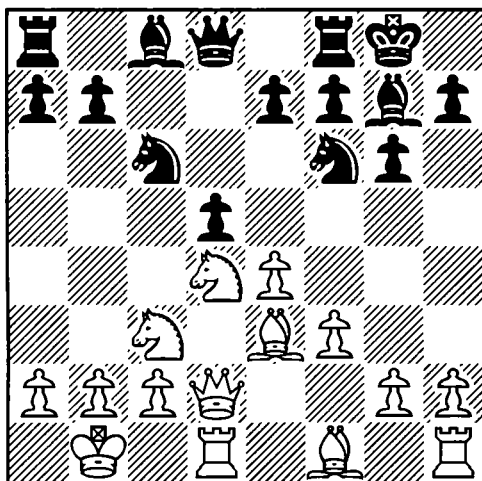
### *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

Although 10...e6 is viable, Black will be forced to defend for a long time. The classical approach with 10...e5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 Nxd5 gives Black a decent version of this structure and is a good choice for those seeking a complicated struggle. The less common 12...cxd5 may actually be the best theoretical antidote, however, as White gets slightly the better of what should amount to a drawn major piece middlegame.

# Chapter Eight

## 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1 (Diagram 1)



**Diagram 1 (B)**

These days 10 Kb1 just seems like another line, but when it was first introduced into practice it was considered rather extravagant. The first point is that Black

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cannot play 10...dxe4?? because after 11 Nxc6 Qxd2 is not check and so 12 Nxe7+ leaves White up a piece. Another point is that after 10...e5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 cxd5 13 Nxd5 Nxd5 14 Qxd5 the typical 14...Qc7 15 Qxa8 Bf5 fails to 16 Qd5! as 16...Qxc2 is not mate! These little tricks aside, the real justification is Leonid Milov's idea 10...Nxd4 11 e5! – despite being up a whole piece and having the move, Black cannot win material. The tempo afforded to Black does give him some choice, but equalizing is still not so simple. Black has three main approaches.

In Game 35 we see the clever queen sacrifice 11...Nf5 12 exf6 Bxf6 13 Nxd5 Qxd5 which for a long time was hailed as a complete theoretical answer to White's novel approach. Black gets rook and bishop for the queen and apparently a position that is easier to play. Black had a lot of success with this approach at first, but white players fought back and sought to prove that 'a queen is a queen'. The move 17 Bb5 has been hailed as something of a counter-refutation. I think the truth lies somewhere in between – White has chances to squeeze Black, but if Black knows what he is doing he should be able to hold the position together.

The next two games feature 11...Nf5 12 exf6 exf6. This approach was considered suspect, but Black's exchange sacrifice makes the line quite playable. There are two main scenarios that can arise in this line. In Game 36 Black gets three minor pieces for a queen. Here the play could simply result in a positional draw, but both sides can choose to press if they are willing to take risks. The other approach is seen in the Game 37, which leads to a more or less normal position where Black has no serious problems.

The non-forcing nature of 10 Kb1 gives Black some scope for creativity and Game 38 sees the amusing 10...Rb8!?. It is interesting that the inclusion of the moves Kb1 and ...Rb8 completely changes the character of the game and the subsequent play has no similarity to the lines we have seen in previous chapters. White's best response is not clear at all and in fact it is not easy to narrow down his choice. There is a lot of scope for analysis here and I have tried to scratch below the surface for future developments.

### **Game 35** **M.Pacher-E.Pinter** **Austrian League 2008**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1 Nxd4**

This is Black's main response. Black's main alternative is 10...Rb8!? which is con-

sidered in Game 38. Other moves have been found lacking. After 10...e6 White has been successful with 11 g4, 11 h4, and 11 Bb5, while 10...e5 seems insufficient as well. After 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 cxd5 13 Nxd5 Be6 (again, 13...Nxd5 14 Qxd5 Qc7 15 Qxa8 Bf5 fails to 16 Qd5!) 14 Nxf6+ Qxf6 15 Bg5 Qf5 16 g4 Qxf3 17 Bg2 Qxg4 18 Bxa8 Rxa8 19 Qd8+ Rxd8 20 Rxd8+ Bf8 21 Bh6 Qb4 22 Rxf8+ Qxf8 23 Bxf8 Kxf8 24 Re1 f6 25 Re3 the endgame clearly favoured White in J.Becerra Rivero-V.Mikhalevski, Bellevue 2006, although somehow Black managed to win!

### 11 e5! (Diagram 2)

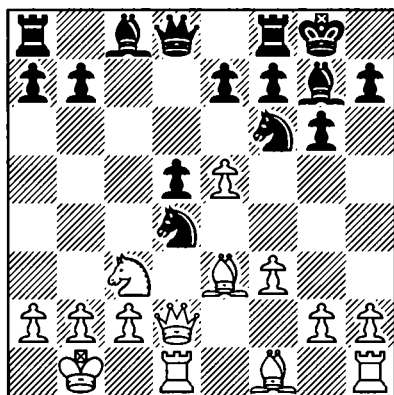


Diagram 2 (B)

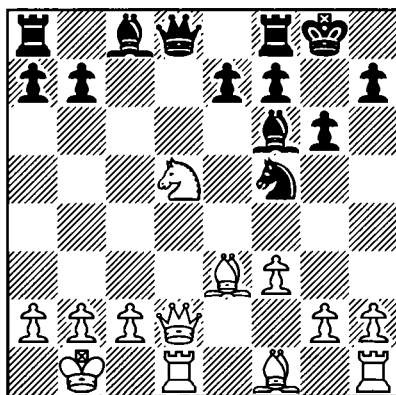


Diagram 3 (B)

Only this move can justify White's play. Instead 11 Bxd4?! dxe4 12 fxe4 Be6 is very comfortable for Black.

### 11...Nf5

This is not the only move, but it is now accepted as best. White has a nice initiative after both 11...Nc6?! 12 exf6 Bxf6 13 Nxd5 Bg7 14 Bh6 and 11...Nd7?! 12 Bxd4 Nxe5 (or 12...e6 13 f4) 13 Qe3 Nc6 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 Nxd5. The main alternative is 11...Nxf3, which maybe is not so terrible, but White has a few ways to look for the initiative after 12 gxf3 Nh5 (Black will suffer after 12...Nd7 13 Nxd5 Bxe5 – and not 13...Nxe5? 14 Nf6+ – 14 Bg5!) and now:

a) 13 Qxd5 Qc7 (13...Qxd5 14 Nxd5 Bxe5 15 Nxe7+ Kg7 may be a better try, but White can at least grab the bishop pair) 14 f4 Bg4 15 Be2 (15 Rd4) 15...Bxe2 16 Nxe2 Rad8 17 Qc5! favoured White in M.Brodsky-M.Marin, Bucharest 1995.

b) 13 Nxd5 is more common, but Black looks to be able to hold things together after 13...Be6 14 f4 (instead 14 Bc4 Bxe5 15 Qb4 Bxd5 16 Bxd5 Qc7 17 Qxb7 Qxb7 18

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Bxb7 Rb8 is okay for Black) 14...Bxd5 15 Qxd5 Qxd5 16 Rxd5 Bh6 17 Bc4 (17 Rb5 has also been tried) and here:

b1) 17...Rfd8 18 Rf1 Rxd5 19 Bxd5 Rd8 20 Bxb7 Bxf4 21 Bxf4 Nxf4 22 c4 gave White an enduring edge in S.Shankland-J.Grefe, San Francisco 2008.

b2) 17...Bxf4 18 Bxf4 Nxf4 19 Rd7 e6 20 Rxb7 Rfc8 21 b3 Rc5 22 Rd1 a5! (after 22...Rxe5 23 Rdd7 Rf5 24 Rxa7 the imbalanced pawn majorities favour White's bishop) 23 Rdd7 Rf8 24 Rb5 Rfc8 25 Rbb7 and the game was drawn in R.Svicevic-N.Ristic, Tivat 1995.

### 12 exf6 Bxf6

12...exf6 is considered in the next two games.

### 13 Nxd5 (Diagram 3) 13...Qxd5!

This sacrifice justifies Black's play. In fact the less flashy 13...Bg7 14 Nf6+ Bxf6 15 Qxd8 Nxe3 16 Qd2 Nxd1 17 Qxd1 transposes, but in that case it looks like Black has fallen into something, whereas the text move shows that Black is giving up his queen on purpose!

### 14 Qxd5 Nxe3 15 Qd2 Nxd1 16 Qxd1 (Diagram 4)

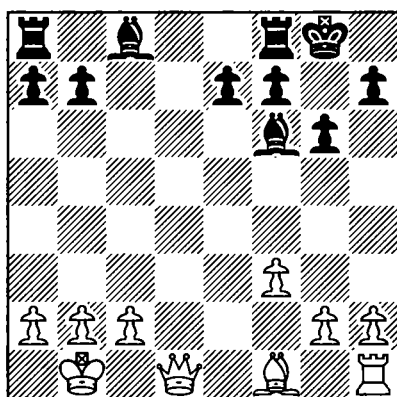


Diagram 4 (B)

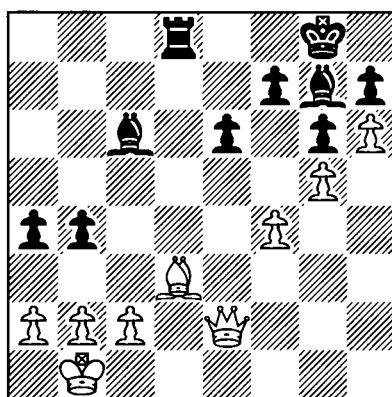


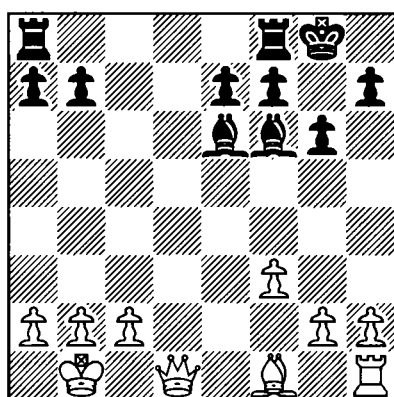
Diagram 5 (B)

### 16...Be6

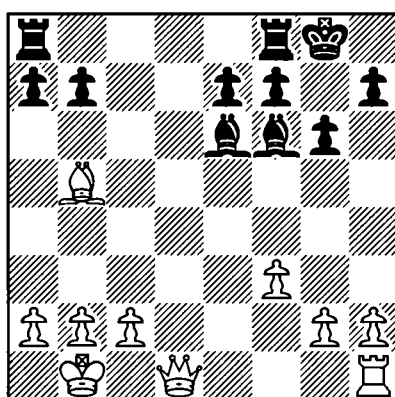
This is almost universally played. The alternative 16...Bf5 looks to avoid the exchange of bishops, but it is likely to run into g2-g4 at some point. After 17 Bc4 (17 Bd3 Rfd8 will damage White's pawn structure) 17...b5 (instead 17...Rfd8 18 Qe2 Bg5 19 Rd1 Rxd1+ 20 Qxd1 Rc8 21 Bb3 Rc6? 22 Qd5 e6 23 Qe5 h5 24 g4 1-0

A. Shabalov-K. Kiewra, Chicago 2004, is by now a well-known miniature) 18 Bb3 a5 19 g4 Rfd8 20 Qe2 Bd7 21 Bd5 Rab8 22 Rd1 a4 23 f4 b4 24 Bc4 e6 25 g5 Bg7 26 Rd6 Bf8 27 Rd3 Bc6 28 h4 Rxd3 29 Bxd3 Bg7 30 h5 Rd8 31 h6! (**Diagram 5**) White has gradually gained space on the kingside. Instead of opening the h-file, this further advance greatly cramps Black and gives him long-term problems with his king position. Indeed, it is difficult to defend against the white queen's mobility. After 31...Bh8 32 Qe3 Bd4 33 Qe1 Rb8 34 Qd2 Bc5 35 Qe2 Bd4 36 Bxg6! hxg6 37 Qc4 White won easily in A. Fier-R. Robson, Hoogeveen 2008.

Returning to 16...Be6 (**Diagram 6**):



**Diagram 6 (W)**



**Diagram 7 (B)**

Black has rook and bishop for the queen and his bishops are both aimed at the white king. At first Black scored very well, as his position is easy to play and white players had trouble defending against a direct attack. White's plans are more sophisticated. In general, he would like to exchange a pair of rooks to diminish Black's attacking chances and potential command of the d-file. White's long-term plan is to advance on the kingside. While opening the h-file will not necessarily be fatal to black's king, the pawn advance can cramp Black's pieces. White may also make progress on the queenside if his king is secure, as he has an extra pawn on this side of the board. If White is able to play on both sides of the board, the queen can really show her power.

### 17 Bb5

This 'floating move' is considered to be the most testing. White simply wants to bring the bishop to b3. The alternatives:

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

a) 17 Bd3 is the most natural developing move. Following 17...Rfd8 18 Qe2 (after 18 Qe1 Rd6 19 Qa5 b6 20 Qe1 Rc8 21 a3 Rc5 22 g4 Rcd5 23 Qg3 h5 24 h3 h4 25 Qf2 Rxd3! 26 cxd3 Rxd3 Black had excellent play in M.Adams-V.Ivanchuk, Dortmund 1998) 18...Rd4 (18...Rd6 is also possible) 19 h4 we have a couple of recent examples:

a1) 19...Rb4 20 b3 a5 21 a3?! a4! 22 axb4 axb3 23 cxb3 Ra1+ 24 Kc2 Rxh1 0-1 was D.De Silva-H.Daurelle, correspondence 2007. White is worse, but resignation looks a bit early, even in a correspondence game.

a2) 19...a5 20 a3 Rad8 21 g4 b5! 22 g5 Bg7 23 Bxb5 Rd2 24 Qe1 was V.Meribanov-D.Gochelashvili, Voronezh 2010. Here 24...Bb3! would be very strong.

b) 17 Be2 looks very modest, but it is quite sensible. The idea is to control d1, as White would like to exchange a set of rooks. Black has:

b1) 17...Rfd8 18 Qc1 Rd6 19 Rd1 Rb6 20 b3 (Dearing was more concerned with 20 c3, but after 20...Rc8! 21 Ka1 Rbc6! Black threatens ...Rxc3!) 20...a5 21 Qe3 Rb4 (after 21...Rc6 22 a4 Rac8 23 c4 Kg7 24 g4 Black had no play in G.Camacho Penate-J.Achig, 1st matchgame, Cuenca 2006) 22 g4 a4 23 Qc5 axb3 24 cxb3 Rf4 25 Qb6 and Black was not well coordinated in G.Camacho Penate-J.Achig, 3rd matchgame, Cuenca 2006.

b2) 17...b5 18 Qd2 a5 19 Bxb5 a4 (not 19...Rfb8 20 a4) 20 g4 Rab8 21 c4 Rfd8 22 Qe2 Rd6 23 Bxa4 (not 23 Rd1 Bxc4!, while 23 h4 Rbd8 is not so simple after 24 Kc2 Bxb2 or 24 Kc1 a3!?) 23...Rxb2+ 24 Qxb2 Bxb2 25 Kxb2 Bxc4 26 Rc1 Bd5 27 Rc3 when White's passed a-pawn gives him some hope and he managed to convert in I.Popov-B.Savchenko, Ulan Ude 2009.

b3) 17...Rac8 18 g4 Rc6 19 Qd2 Rfc8 20 c3 b5 21 a3 a6 22 h4 h5 23 Qf4 (after 23 gxh5 Bf5+ 24 Ka1? loses to 24...Rxc3, while 24 Ka2 Be6+ is a draw) 23...Rc5 24 Bd1 a5 25 Re1 R8c6 26 g5 Bg7 27 Bc2 Rd6 28 Kc1 a4 was very solid for Black in A.Fedorov-V.Jianu, Eforie Nord 2009. The Dragon expert could not break down his favourite opening from the white side.

Returning to 17 Bb5 (**Diagram 7**):

### **17...a6**

It is natural to gain time like this, although Black is driving the bishop where it wants to go. Black can also try to do without this move:

a) 17...Rfd8 18 Qe2 Rd4 19 Rd1 Rad8 20 Rxd4 Rxd4 21 a3!? h5 22 Bd3 Kg7 23 g3 a5 24 f4 Bg4 25 Qf1 Bd7 26 f5 was much better for White in F.Caruana-E.Pinter, Szeged 2007. White has exchanged his rook and Black's kingside is compromised.

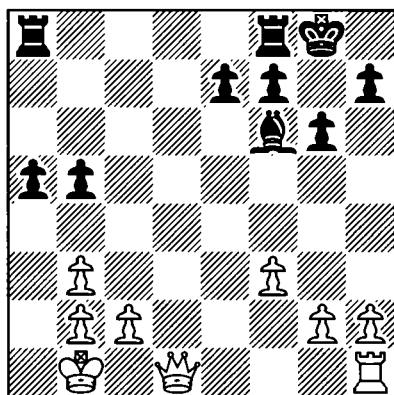
b) 17...Rac8 18 Qe2 a6 19 Ba4 Bc4 20 Qe3 Rfd8 21 Bb3 Rd6 22 Bxc4 Rxc4 23 c3 Rc7



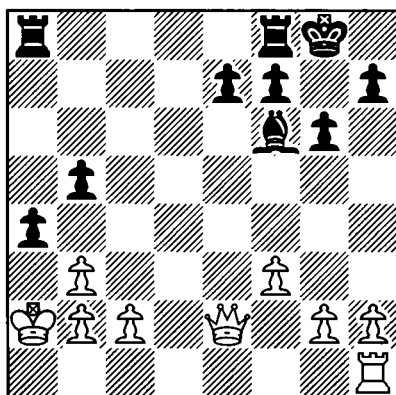
24 Kc2 Rcd7 25 g4 Bh4 (this blocks White's h-pawn, but White can still cause Black problems on the kingside) 26 f4 Re6 27 Qf3 Red6 28 Qg2 (White threatens g5 and Qg4) 28...g5 (after 28...Bf6 29 g5 Bg7 30 h4 with the idea h5-h6 will cramp Black) 29 f5 Kg7 30 Rf1 b5 31 Qe2 was much better for White in K.Mekhitarian-R.Aloma Vidal, Barcelona 2008, as the h4-bishop was out of play.

### 18 Ba4 Rfd8

With this move Black intends to gain time against the white bishop with ...Rd4. In practice Black has scored better with 18...b5, which was Dearing's recommendation. After 19 Bb3 Bxb3 20 axb3 (following 20 cxb3?! Rad8 21 Qe2 Bg5 White settled for a draw by repetition with 22 Qe5 Bf6 in C.Lutz-A.Delchev, Pula 1997, as 22 Rd1? runs into 22...Rxd1+ 23 Qxd1 Rc8! when the ensuing pawn ending is winning for Black) 20...a5 (**Diagram 8**)



**Diagram 8 (W)**



**Diagram 9 (B)**

Black looks to have decent play, but an idea mentioned by Dzindzichashvili may cause him some problems.

a) 21 c3?! a4 22 b4 a3 gives Black a strong attack: 23 Qd5 Rfd8 24 Qb7? was played in G.Filev-T.Georgescu, Bucharest 2008, and here 24...axb2! wins easily after 25 Kc2 Rac8 26 Kxb2 Rxc3 or 25 Kxb2 Rd2+ 26 Kb3 Rda2!.

b) 21 Qd3 a4 22 Ka2 (again, 22 b4 is the wrong idea and after 22...a3 23 bxa3 Rfc8 24 c4 bxc4 25 Qe3 Rd8 26 Rc1 Rd3 White was crushed in C.Kennaugh-R.Webb, British League 1998) 22...Rfd8 23 Qe2 (this is the same idea as in the next note, but White is a tempo down; it is still good enough though) 23...Rd4 (or 23...b4 24 bxa4 Rxa4+ 25 Kb3) 24 Rd1 axb3+ 25 Kxb3 Rda4 26 Qxb5 and White was clearly better

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

in A.Espinosa Aranda-L.Garcia Lopez, Albacete 2009.

c) 21 Qe2 a4 22 Ka2! (Diagram 9).



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** White wants to park his king on b3 where it will be quite safe. One big problem for Black compared to the main game is that White is ready to challenge a rook on the d-file.

A model example of White's long-term plan went 22...Rfc8 23 Rd1 Ra7 (if 23...Rfd8 24 Rd1!, while 23...Rc7 24 f4 Rac8 25 Rd2 Rc5 26 Qe4 axb3+ 27 Kxb3 h5 28 c3 e6 29 g3 Rd8?! 30 Rxd8+ Bxd8 31 Qa8 Rd5 32 Kc2 Kg7 33 Qc6 with a big advantage was J.Radovanovic-R.Webb, Portsmouth 2005) 24 f4 e6 25 g4 Rac7 26 Rd2 axb3+ 27 Kxb3 Rc4 28 Qf3 R8c7 29 Qf1 Be7 30 c3 R4c5 31 Qe2 h5 32 h3 Kg7 33 Qe4 Kh7 34 Rd3 Rc4 35 Qe5 R4c5 36 Qd4 Kg8 37 f5! Rd5 38 Qf4 e5 39 Qe4 Rxd3 40 Qxd3 hxd4 41 fxg6 1-0 B.Feldborg-G.Halldorsson, correspondence 2006.

Returning to 18...Rfd8:

**19 Qe2 Rd4 20 Bb3 Bxb3 21 axb3 Rad8 (Diagram 10)**

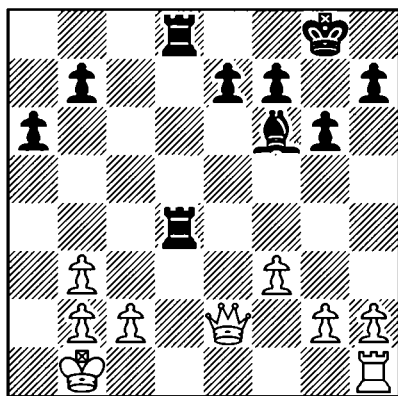


Diagram 10 (W)

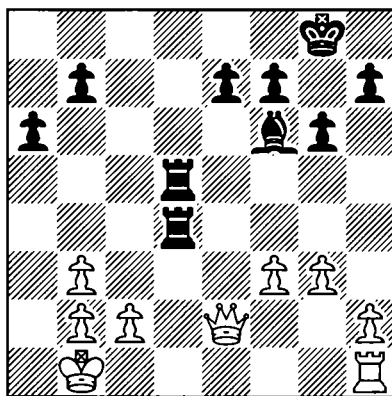


Diagram 11 (W)

**22 g3!?**

This patient move looks best. If 22 h4?! Bxh4 is safe enough. White has also tried 22 g4 and here:

a) 22...Bh4 is awkward and 23 Qe3 R8d5 24 f4 e6 25 f5! saw White favourably open the position in E.Pinter-R.Loetscher, Szeged 2007.

b) 22...g5!? 23 Qe3 R8d5 24 h4?! (this is risky) 24...gxh4 25 f4 h6 26 Rg1 e5!?

(26...e6) 27 fxe5 Bg5 28 Qc3 Re4 29 Qc8+ Kg7 30 e6 Rxe6 31 Qxb7 Rde5 32 Qh1 Re3 33 b4 h4 was good for Black in F.Slingerland-D.Vocaturo, Hoogeveen 2010.

c) 22...R8d5 follows the plan seen in the game and 23 h4 h5 (also possible but risky is 23...Bxh4 24 Qh2 Rd1+ 25 Rxd1 Rxd1+ 26 Ka2 Bf6 27 Qb8+ Kg7 28 Qxb7 Rd2) 24 g5 Be5 25 c3 Rd2 26 Qc4 Kg7 looks okay for Black.

### **22...R8d5! (Diagram 11)**

Black centralizes both of his rooks and allows for the possibility of playing ...h5. A couple of other examples show the originator of 10 Kb1 gradually improving White's position against less purposeful play:

a) 22...R8d6 23 h4 Re6 24 Qf2 h5 25 Re1 Red6 26 c3 R4d5 27 b4 a5 28 bxa5 Rxa5 29 Kc2 Rb5 30 Ra1 Re6 31 Ra4 Reb6 32 Ra2 Kg7 33 g4 hxg4 34 fxg4 g5 35 hxg5 Bxg5 36 b4 Rc6 37 Kb3 Rd5 38 Qf3 Rcd6 39 Rh2 and White had a strong attack in L.Milov-A.Umbach, Zurich 2004.

b) 22...Kg7 23 Kc1 b5 24 c3 R4d5 25 b4 h5 26 Kc2 e6 27 h4 Be5 28 Qf2 R8d7 29 Ra1! (White has used both sides of the board) 29...R5d6 30 Qe1 Bf6 31 g4 and White soon broke through in L.Milov-M.Baldauf, German League 2008.

### **23 f4 e6 24 Qf3**

Another example which shows some possibilities for each side went 24 Rf1 Rd2 (this is fine, but Black could consider 24...b5, as in the main game; now White's queen gets into Black's position) 25 Qc4 b5 (25...Rxh2!? 26 Qc8+ Kg7 27 Qxb7 Rdd2 28 Qc6 h5 would give Black some counterplay on the kingside) 26 Qc8+ Kg7 27 Qxa6 Rxh2 28 g4 h6 (Black is a bit cramped) 29 Qc6 Rhd2 30 b4 g5?! (this loosens Black's king position; 30...R2d4 is a much better try) 31 fxg5 hxg5 32 Rh1 R2d4 33 Qe8! Rd8 34 Qxb5 Rxg4 35 Qb7 by when White had a passed b-pawn and Black's king position was not so comfortable. The position may seem double-edged, but here the queen can show her its strength and White went on to win in D.Svetushkin-R.Polzin, Paleochora 2010.

### **24...b5 25 g4 a5 26 Rg1**

Instead 26 h4 would be met by 26...h5.

### **26...Kf8**

This avoids tricks with f4-f5.

### **27 Rf1 a4 28 Ka2 (Diagram 12)**

White sticks with the method prescribed by Dzindzichashvili.

### **28...Kg7**

Black correctly keeps the tension on the queenside.

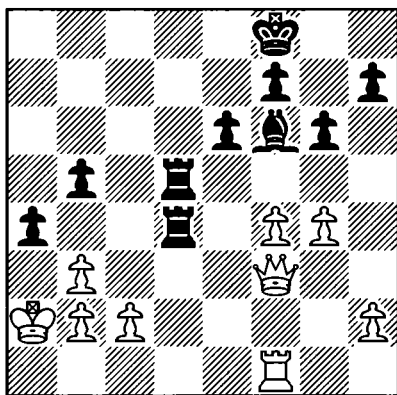
### **29 Qh3?!**

If 29 bxa4 Black should play 29...bxa4! (but not 29...Rxa4+ 30 Kb3! and White has his desired set-up). Perhaps White should keep his options open with something like 29 h3, but it is not easy to break through.

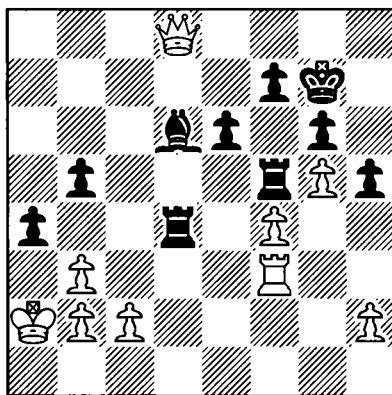
### **29...h5!**

This clarifies the position on the kingside and fixes the f4-pawn.

**30 g5 Be7 31 Qc3 Bb4 32 Qc7?! Bd6 33 Qd8 Rf5 34 Rf3 (Diagram 13)**



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (B)**

Black has played very well and White has overreached a bit.

### **34...Be5**

Black could have played for a win with 34...axb3+! 35 Rxb3 (worse are 35 Kxb3 Rb4+ and 35 cxb3 Be5) 35...Ra4+ 36 Kb1 Bxf4 37 Rxb5 Rxb5 38 Qf6+ Kg8 39 Qd8+ Kh7 40 Qd7 and now Black could try 40...Rf5! 41 Qxa4 Bxh2 when the passed h-pawn gives him good chances.

### **35 Qe8 Bd6 36 Rc3 axb3+!**

This exchange is well timed.

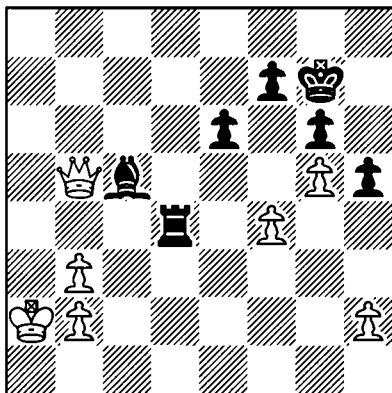
### **37 cxb3**

If 37 Kxb3 Rxfx4 38 Rc8 Black is able to exchange rooks after 38...Rb4+ 39 Ka2 Ra4+ 40 Kb3 (not 40 Kb1 Rf1 mate) 40...Rfb4+ 41 Kc3 Rc4+ 42 Rxc4 Rxc4+ 43 Kd3 Rc5 and Black has all the chances. If 44 h4 Bg3 and White's pawns drop like apples.

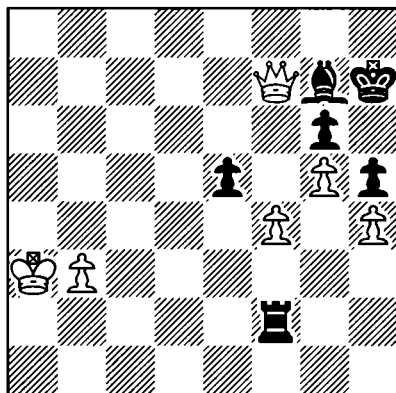
### **37...Rc5?**

Trading rooks is usually a mistake on general principles unless there is something concrete to be gained (as in the note above). Black would still be okay after 37...Bc5.

**38 Rxc5 Bxc5 39 Qxb5 (Diagram 14)**



**Diagram 14 (B)**



**Diagram 15 (W)**

Now White is much better. He has a passed b-pawn and Black has trouble creating any play on the kingside. The next stage of the game sees White trying to break Black's blockade of the b4-square.

**39...Bd6 40 Qb6 Rd5 41 Qd8**

Instead 41 b4 Bxf4 would give Black unnecessary counterplay.

**41...Bf8**

Not 41...Bxf4? 42 Qf6+.

**42 Qc7 Kg8 43 Qc4 Rc5 44 Qd4 Rb5 45 Qc4 Rb4 46 Qc7 Re4 47 Qb8**

White has been reluctant to play h2-h4, but this move will secure both the h- and g-pawns.

**47...Rd4 48 Qe5 Rd2**

Holding firm with 48...Rd5 looks like a better try.

**49 Qb8 Rd4 50 Qe5 Bg7 51 Qb8+ Kh7**

And here 51...Bf8 looks like a better try. Defending positions like these is wearisome and Black stakes his chances on an attack on b2.

**52 h4! Rd2 53 Qe8**

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

White is distracted by the chance to pick apart Black's kingside. The more consistent 53 b4 Rxb2+ 54 Ka3 should be good enough to win.

**53...Rxb2+ 54 Ka3 Rf2 55 Qxf7 e5 (Diagram 15)**

White is still much better, but Black has some counterplay now.

**56 b4**

Interesting is 56 f5! Rxf5 57 Qb7 when Black is not so well coordinated and the b-pawn is ready to roll.

**56...Rf3+ 57 Ka4 Rxf4 58 Qc7**

Better would have been 58 Qe7!.

**58...Rxb4 59 Ka5 Rh1 60 b5 h4**

After this move White should win handily. 60...e4 was a better try.

**61 b6 h3 62 Qc3?**

Instead 62 Qc2! covers both the e4- and b1-squares. After 62...h2 63 Kb5 White should win: for example, 63...e4 64 Qxe4 Rg1 65 Qh4+ Kg8 66 Qxh2 Rxg5+ 67 Kc6 Be5 68 Qh6 Rg2 69 Kd7!.

**62...e4!**

Now Black scrapes out a draw.

**63 Qg3 h2**

White cannot stop ...Ra1+ so he must give perpetual check.

**64 Qh3+ Kg8 65 Qe6+ Kh7 ½-½**

## *Game 36* **L.Nisipeanu-T.Radjabov** Bazna 2009

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1 Nxd4 11 e5 Nf5 12 exf6 exf6!? (Diagram 16)**

This is a sharper try for Black. In order to play for a meaningful advantage, White will have to take some risks.

**13 Bc5**

This is White's main attempt to prove an advantage. Other moves lead to more stable positions, but White cannot expect too much:

a) 13 Qxd5 is very rare, but not necessarily bad: 13...Qc7!? (a winning attempt; instead 13...Qxd5 14 Nxd5 Nxe3 15 Nxe3 f5 is level) 14 Qc5! Qb8 15 Nd5?! (White

should prefer 15 Bf2 when Black can play 15...b6 or 15...Be6 16 g4 Rc8 17 Qa3 Bf8 with the idea of ...Nd6 with reasonable counterplay according to Smith) 15...Nxe3 16 Qxe3 f5 (better is 16...Be6 when Black has no problems) 17 Qe7?! (17 Bc4 is better because 17...b5? fails to 18 Ne7+ Kh8 19 Bxf7! – Smith) 17...Be6 18 Nc7 Bf6!? (after 18...Rd8 Black has a little something with the bishop pair following 19 Rxd8+ Qxd8 20 Qxd8+ Rxd8 21 Bd3 Bc8, so White should play 19 Bb5 Bf8 20 Rxd8 Qxd8 21 Qxd8 Rxd8 22 Nxe6 fxe6 23 Bc4 Kf7 24 Re1, although here too Black can try to fight on with 24...Rd2!? with the idea 25 Bxe6+?! Kf6 when he is a little better) 19 Qxf6 Qxc7 is pretty level. Black managed to gradually outplay his opponent in splendid fashion: 20 Be2?! Rac8 21 Bd3 Rfd8 22 b3 Rd6 23 Qb2 Rcd8 24 h4 h5 25 Rde1 Rd4 26 Qc1 Kg7 27 Qg5 R8d5 28 Qe3 a5 29 a4 Qc3 30 Qc1 Kh7 31 Qb2 Qc5 32 Re2 Rxd3! 33 cxd3 Rxd3 34 Re5 Qd6 35 Rb5 Rd2 36 Qc3 f4 37 Kc1 Rxd3 38 Rd1 Qa3+ 39 Kb1 Qa2+ 40 Kc1 Qa3+ 41 Kb1 Bc4! 42 Rg5 Rh2 43 Re5 Bxb3 0-1 L.Jiang-B.Smith, Ledyard 2009.

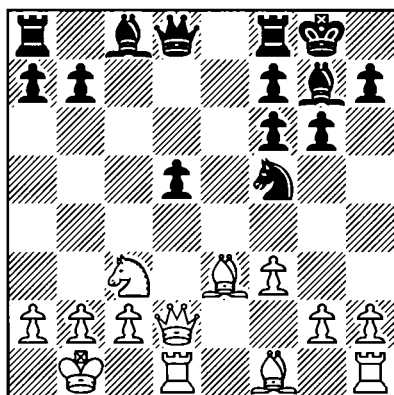


Diagram 16 (W)

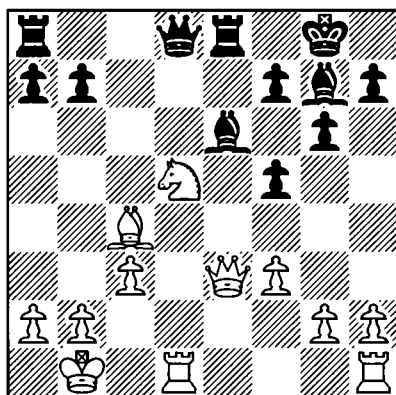


Diagram 17 (W)

b) 13 Nxd5 Nxe3 14 Qxe3 Be6 15 Bc4 is considered to be very slightly better for White, but drawish. After 15...f5 (worse are 15...b5?! 16 Nf4 and 15...Re8?! 16 Nf4 Qc8 17 Bxe6 fxe6 18 Rd6) 16 c3 Bxd5 17 Bxd5 gives White a risk-free edge, as his bishop is as good as Black's and he has a more valuable pawn majority in any possible endgame. So Black should prefer 16...Re8 (**Diagram 17**) when White has:

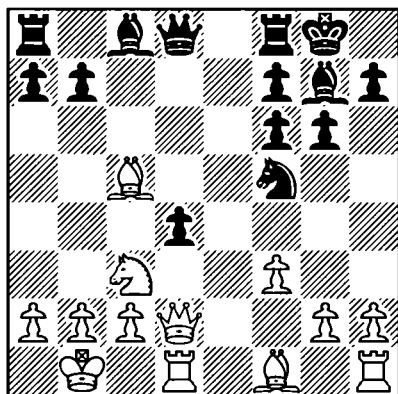
b1) 17 Qf2 Qb8 18 Qh4 b5 19 Bb3 a5 20 Nf6+? and a draw was agreed in D.Recuerdo Guerra-A.Arribas Lopez, Pamplona 2008, but Black could have played 20...Bxf6 21 Qxf6 Bxb3 22 axb3 Re6 23 Qd4 a4 with a strong attack. White should have preferred 20 Ne7+ Kf8 21 Bxe6 Rxe7 22 Bd5, although Black is fine after 22...Raa7. If 23 Qxh7? b4 with an attack.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

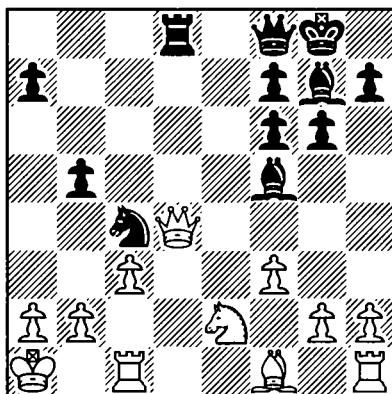
b2) 17 Nf4 Qc7 (some black players may be attracted to the queen sacrifice 17...Bxc4!? 18 Rxd8 Raxd8) 18 Bxe6 fxe6 19 Rhe1 Qc6 20 Nd3 (or 20 h4!?) 20...e5 21 Nb4 Qc4 22 Nd5 with a slight edge for White according to Van der Tak.

b3) 17 Qf4 Rc8 (Van der Tak suggests 17...Qa5) 18 Bb3 Qa5 (18...Rc5 19 Rhe1 Bxd5 20 Rxe8+ Qxe8 21 Bxd5 left White with a slight edge in V.Laznicka-L.Cernousek, Cartak 2004) 19 Qh4 Qd8 20 Qf4 (20 Qb4!?) 20...Qa5 21 Rhe1 Qc5 22 Qh4 b5 23 Nf6+ Bxf6 24 Qxf6 Bxb3 25 Rxe8+ Rxe8 26 axb3 Qf2 gave Black counterplay in L.Milov-C.Koepke, Nuremberg 2010, and Black went on to score an upset against the 10 Kb1 pioneer.

**13...d4! (Diagram 18)**



**Diagram 18 (W)**



**Diagram 19 (W)**

Black must take up the gauntlet. White is much better after 13...Re8?! 14 Nxd5 Bd7 15 g4 Bc6 16 Bc4 Nd6 17 Bb3 because of his excellent centralization.

**14 Bxf8**

White must accept Black's offer. Instead 14 Nb5?! Re8 15 Nxd4 Bh6! 16 f4 (16 Qc3 loses to 16...Ne3 17 Re1 Nd5! 18 Rxe8+ Qxe8 19 Qa5 b6 when White cannot cover his first rank) 16...Nxd4 (Black is spoilt for choice; this is simple, but 16...b6, 16...Ne3, and 16...Qc7 all look good too) 17 Qxd4 (17 Bb5 is strongly met by the neat 17...Re5!, while 17 Bxd4 Bg4 18 Bb5 Bxd1 19 Bxe8 Bxc2+ 20 Kxc2 Qxe8 leaves White a pawn down) 17...Qxd4 18 Bxd4 Bg4 19 Bb5 Red8 (19...Bxd1!? 20 Bxe8 Bxc2+ 21 Kxc2 Rxe8 leaves Black with an extra, albeit doubled pawn) 20 Rd3 Be2 21 Bxf6 Bxd3 22 Bxd3 Re8 (22...Rd6 looks even better) left Black up the exchange for a pawn in S.Jessel-C.Ward, Douglas 2005.

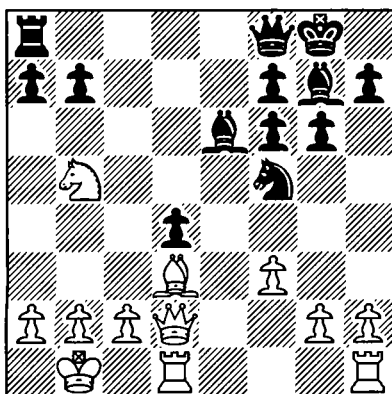
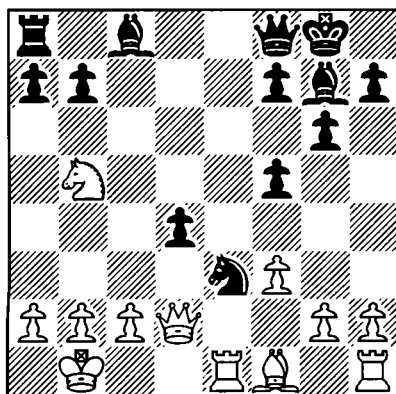


**14...Qxf8 15 Nb5**

Instead 15 Ne2?! leaves White struggling to develop. After 15...Ne3 (15...Be6 and 15...Bh6 are alternatives) 16 Rc1 Nc4!? (Black again has alternatives in 16...f5 and 16...Bh6) 17 Qxd4 b5 18 c3 (instead 18 Qc3 intends Nd4, but after 18...Bh6 19 f4 Bb7 Black has decent compensation, while 18 Nf4 f5! 19 Qd5 Bb7! was very good for Black in N.Ly Hong-Nguyen Duc Hoa Ho Chi Minh City 2010, because 20 Qxb7? gets White mated after 20...Nd2+ 21 Ka1 Bxb2+!) 18...Bf5+ 19 Ka1 Rd8 (**Diagram 19**) Black has a strong initiative: 20 Qf2 Rd2 (also good is 20...Nxb2 because 21 Kxb2 Rd2+ 22 Ka1 Qa3 mates and 21 Nd4 Nd3 22 Bxd3 Bxd3 gives Black a great position) 21 Qxa7 Nxb2 (I like 21...Rd7!? with ideas like 22 Qa6 Qb8 intending ...Ra7 or 22 Qf2 Nd2! with the idea of ...Nb3+!) 22 Nd4 Na4 23 Nxb5? (White missed her chance to fight back with 23 Nxf5! with the idea 23...Qa3? 24 Ne7+ Kf8 25 Qb8+ Kxe7 26 Re1+ when it is Black who is mated) 23...Nxc3! 24 Bc4 (Black also wins after 24 Rxc3 Rd1+ or 24 Nxc3 Qb4) 24...Nxb5 25 Qe3 Bd3 0-1 was K.Lahno-B.Jobava, Dubai 2004. If 26 Qxd2 f5+.

**15...Ne3**

Instead 15...Bh6 16 f4 (16 Qa5!?) 16...Be6 17 Nc7 Rc8 18 Nxe6 fxe6 19 g3 gave White some advantage in P.Sardy-J.Palkovi, Hungarian League 2007, but 15...Be6 is a reasonable alternative. After 16 Bd3 (alternatives are worse: 16 Nc7 Rc8 17 Nxe6 fxe6 looks okay for Black; 16 Nxd4 Rd8 17 c3 Nxd4 18 cxd4 f5 19 Qc3 Qd6 gives more than enough compensation; and Black also has good compensation for the exchange after 16 g4 Ne3 17 Re1 Rd8, intending 18 Nxd4 Nxc2! 19 Qxc2 Rxd4) Black has (**Diagram 20**):

**Diagram 20 (B)****Diagram 21 (W)**

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

a) 16...Ne3 17 Nxd4! (worse is 17 Rc1? Qc5! with the idea of ...f5, while 17 Rde1 f5 also gives Black decent play) 17...Nxd1 18 Nxe6 fxe6 19 Rxd1 Qc5 20 Qe2 Qb6 21 Bc4 and White had some advantage in H.Hamdouchi-R.Gerber, Geneva 2008, because his bishop is more active and his king is safer.

b) 16...Bh6 and here:

b1) 17 Qa5 a6 18 Nc7 Qd8 19 Qc5 Rc8 20 Nxe6 fxe6 21 Qb4 was L.Milov-B.Grimberg, Nuremberg 2009. Here Black could try 21...Ne3 with unclear play.

b2) 17 f4! Ne3 18 Rde1 (this is natural enough, but Black seems to hang on) 18...Qc5 19 Nxd4 Qxd4 20 Qxe3 Qxe3 21 Rxe3 Bxf4 gives Black reasonable compensation for the exchange and a draw was soon agreed after 22 Re4 Be5 23 h3 Rc8 24 Rd1 Rc7 25 a4 Kg7 in M.Sanchez-D.Brunsteins, correspondence 2007. White could have tried 18 Nxd4!? Nxd1 19 Nxe6 fxe6 20 Rxd1 e5 21 g3 with perhaps a slight edge.

Returning to 15...Ne3:

### **16 Re1!**

This leads to complicated play where either side must take some chances in order to play for a win. White should avoid 16 Nxd4?! Nxd1 17 Qxd1 f5, while 16 Rc1 is covered in the next game.

### **16...f5 (Diagram 21) 17 f4**

The alternative is 17 Nxd4 f4 and then:

a) 18 Rxe3 fxe3 19 Qxe3 Bd7 is fine for Black.

b) 18 g4 Qd6 19 Nb3 Qf6 20 c3 Be6 21 Rxe3 fxe3 22 Qxe3 Re8 23 Bd3 b5 gave Black good compensation for the pawn in S.Vedmediuc-S.Bargan, Kishinev 2010.

c) 18 c3 Bxd4 19 cxd4 (not 19 Qxd4? Bf5+) 19...Qd6 20 Rxe3 fxe3 21 Qxe3 Be6 22 Bd3 Rd8 23 Be4 b6 is level, but the play sharpened quickly after 24 Rd1 Qxh2 25 d5 Qe5 26 f4 Qh5 27 Bf3 Bg4 28 Qe7 Rc8 29 d6 Qf5+ 30 Be4?! (30 Ka1 was safer) in O.Soto Paez-K.Kuderinov, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010. Now 30...Qxf4! 31 g3 (if 31 d7 Bxd7) 31...Qe3! looks strong and even better than 31...Qxe4+ 32 Qxe4 Bf5.

d) 18 g3 Qd8 19 Nb3 (not 19 c3? Bxd4 20 Rxe3 fxe3 21 Qxd4 Bf5+ 22 Ka1 Qxd4 23 cxd4 when both 23...Rd8 and 23...Rc8 win easily) 19...Qf6 20 Qc1 Bf5 21 Bd3 Rc8 (better is 21...Bxd3 22 cxd3 Qf5 23 Rxe3 fxe3 24 Qxe3 when Black has good compensation after 24...a5, 24...Rd8, or 24...Qb5) 22 Bxf5 Qxf5 23 Re2 a5 24 Rhe1 a4 25 gxf4 axb3 was drawn here in K.Akshayraj-S.Ganguly, Mangalore 2008. White could have tested his higher-rated opponent with 26 axb3 Bd4 27 Rxe3 Bxe3 28 Rxe3 when Black would have had to work to draw.

17...Qc5 18 c3 Nxf1 19 Re8+ Bf8 20 Qxd4 (Diagram 22)

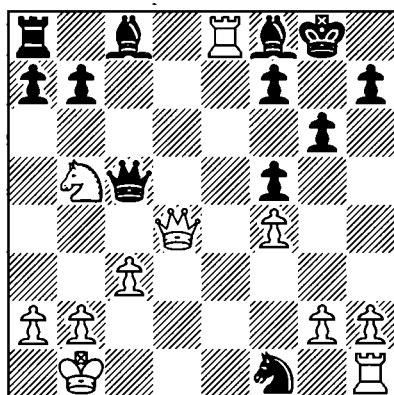


Diagram 22 (B)

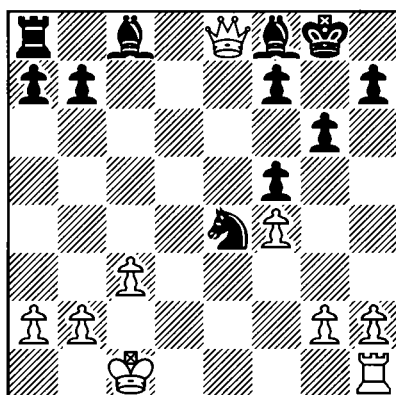


Diagram 23 (W)

20...Qxb5

The alternative 20...Qxd4?! appears to avoid danger, but Black will not be able to get his pieces out: 21 cxd4 Nd2+ 22 Ka1 Ne4 (Jones also gives 22...Nc4 23 Rc1 Nb6 24 Nc7 Rb8 25 a4! a5 26 b4! axb4 27 a5 Nd7 28 Nd5 with a big advantage) 23 Rc1 a6 24 Nc7 Rb8 25 Nxa6 (or 25 d5!?) 25...bxa6 26 Rxc8 Rxc8 27 Rxc8 when Black will have trouble coping with White's queenside majority according to Jones.

21 Qd8 Nd2+

Black is in trouble after 21...Qc5 22 Rxf1 Kg7 23 Rc1! when 23...b6 24 b4 Qd6 25 Rd1 wins and 23...a5 24 Qd4+! f6 25 Qxc5 Bxc5 26 Rd1 leaves Black unable to develop.

22 Kc2

Not 22 Kc1 Qc5 23 Kxd2 Kg7 and Black will untangle.

22...Qa4+

The immediate 22...Qxe8 23 Qxe8 Ne4 24 Rd1 Nf6 25 Qd8 was similar in K.Landa-D.Vocaturro, Reggio Emilia 2010.

23 Kc1

Another idea is 23 Kxd2!? Qxf4+ 24 Kd1 Qh6 25 Rhe1 f4 26 R1e2!.

23...Qxe8

Not 23...Nb3+ 24 axb3 Qxf4+ 25 Kb1 Qh6 26 Rhe1 with the idea of Rxf8+ and Re8.

**24 Qxe8 Ne4 (Diagram 23)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** A highly unusual position has been reached. Black has three minor pieces for a queen. This would be quite nice for Black... if he could get his pieces out.

**25 Rd1 Nf6 26 Qe5 Nd7**

Black could try to avoid a repetition with 26...Nh5 27 Rd8 Ng7 28 Qd6 Ne6 29 Re8 a5 with the idea of ...Ra6-c6, as 30 Qa3?! b6 would allow him to untangle.

**27 Qe8 Nf6 28 Qd8**

White avoids any repetition.

**28...Ne4**

Jones suggests 28...Kg7 (intending ...b6 and ...Bb7) 29 Qc7 Be6 30 Qxb7 Rc8 31 Qxa7 Bc5 with unclear play.

**29 Rd7!?**

White plays for the win, but he could wait and play a useful move like 29 g3.

**29...Bxd7 30 Qxa8 Bc6 31 Qxa7 Nc5 32 g3 Nd3+ 33 Kb1 Be4 34 Ka1 Bc5 35 Qb8+ Kg7 36 Qd8 Bg1 37 h4 h5 38 a4 Bf2**

Maybe 38...Ne1!?.

**39 a5 Bxg3**

Again Black could try 39...Ne1!? with the idea of ...Nf3 to cover d4 and e5 in preparation for ...Bxg3.

**40 Qd4+ ½-½**

*Game 37*  
**N.Short-M.Carlsen**  
London 2009

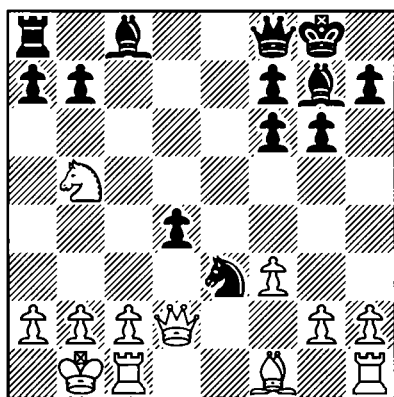
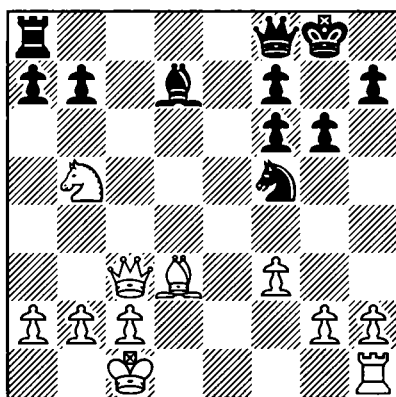
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1 Nxd4 11 e5 Nf5 12 exf6 exf6 13 Bc5 d4 14 Bxf8 Qxf8 15 Nb5 Ne3 16 Rc1 (Diagram 24)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** White's pieces look vulnerable on the c1-h6 diagonal, but this move avoids the unusual material balance of the previous game.

**16...Bh6**

Instead 16...f5?! 17 Nxd4 f4 18 c3 Qd6 (here 18...Bxd4 19 cxd4 would just open a file for White's rook) 19 Bd3 is insufficient for Black. After 19...Bxd4 20 cxd4 Be6 (if 20...Qxd4 21 Qc3 gives White the initiative after 21...Qd8 22 Be4 Nxd2 23 Rhd1 Qh4 24 Qc7 or 21...Qd5 22 Bc4!, rather than 22 Be4 Bf5! 23 Bxf5 Qxf5+ 24 Ka1 Nxd2 when Black looks okay) 21 Be4 Rd8 (after 21...f5 White must avoid 22 Bxb7? Rb8 23 Bc6 Nc4 and instead play 22 Bc2!) 22 g3 Nc4 23 Qc3 b5 (23...Qxd4 24 Qxd4 Rxd4 25 Rhd1 trades off Black's rook and gives White a winning endgame) 24 gxf4 Qxf4 25 Rhd1 and Black never had quite enough in J.Smets-G.Jones, London 2009.

**Diagram 24 (B)****Diagram 25 (B)****17 Qxd4**

There are a couple of alternatives, but they should not unduly worry Black:

a) 17 Qa5 b6! 18 Qa4 Nxf1 19 Rcx f1 Bd7 is awkward for White: 20 Qc4 (after 20 Qb3 Qc5 Black has a strong initiative after 21 c4 a6 22 Na3 b5 or 21 Na3 Rc8 with the idea of ...b5) 20...Rc8 21 Qd5 (21 Qd3? Bf5) 21...Bc6 22 Qb3 Qc5 with excellent play.

b) 17 f4! (White offers the f-pawn to gain a tempo) 17...Bxf4 18 Qxd4 Bg5 (instead Van der Tak suggests 18...Bh6 19 Nc7 Rb8 20 Qxa7 Bf5 21 Bd3 Bxd3 22 cxd3 Qd8, while 18...Qh6 19 Qxf6 Bf5 20 Nd4 Be4 is possible as well) 19 Bd3 (19 Nc7 Rb8 20 Qxa7 Bf5 21 Bd3 Bxd3 22 cxd3 Qd8 is similar to Van der Tak's line above) 19...Bf5 (19...Nxd2!?) 20 Qd6 was E.Weinzettl-R.Rapport, Austrian League 2011. Here Black should play 20...a6 21 Qxf8+ Rxf8 22 Nd6 Bxd3 23 cxd3 Nxd2 with an unclear endgame. If 24 Rc7 Bf4.

**17...Nf5 18 Qc3**

Others:

a) 18 Qxf6 Be6!? (after 18...Bg7 19 Qg5 Bh6 20 Qg4 Bxc1 21 Kxc1 Be6 22 Nc3 Black has nothing clear for his lost pawn) 19 Nc7 (19 Rd1 Bg7 20 Qg5 Bh6 repeats) 19...Bxa2+! 20 Kxa2 Bg7 21 Qg5 Bxb2 22 Kxb2 Qb4+ with a perpetual check.

b) 18 Qf2 Be3 19 Qe1 Bxc1 20 Qxc1 Qc5 21 Nc3 Be6 was level in J.Thomsen-J.Moreira, correspondence 2007. Black's active pieces compensate for his worse pawn structure.

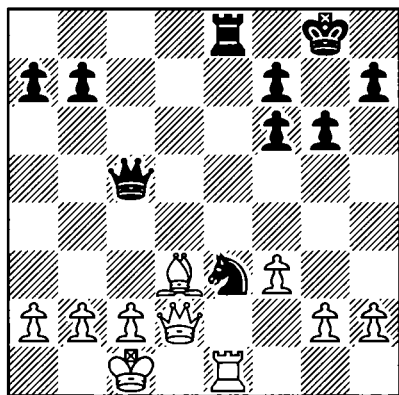
**18...Bxc1 19 Kxc1 Bd7 20 Bd3 (Diagram 25)**

The game J.Smeets-T.Radjabov, Novi Sad 2009, was agreed drawn here. Carlsen decides that Black can play for a win without much risk.

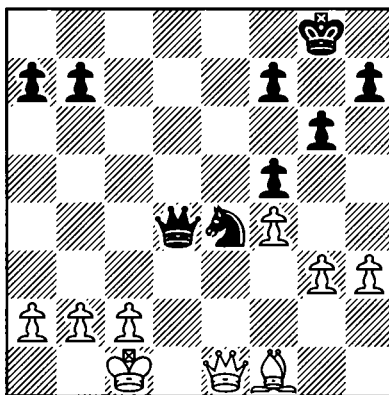
**20...Rc8 21 Qd2**

Worse is 21 Qxf6?! Bxb5 22 Bxb5 Qh6+ 23 Kb1 Qd2 and Black has the initiative after 24 Bd3 Re8! or 24 Rc1 Ne3.

**21...Bxb5 22 Bxb5 Qc5 23 Bd3 Ne3 24 Re1 Re8 (Diagram 26)**



**Diagram 26 (W)**



**Diagram 27 (W)**

With a bishop against a knight and a healthier pawn majority, it would appear that White can never be worse. However, Black's e3-knight is difficult to dislodge and his extra f-pawn proves to be useful.



**TIP: While pawn structure is important, piece activity is generally more important. Objectively, this game should be equal, but Black's position is easier to play.**

**25 Qf2**

White pins the knight from another direction, but 25 g4 Re6 26 h4, with equal play, looks better.

**25...f5**

Also possible is 25...Re5!? 26 c3 (worse is 26 Be4 Nxg2! 27 Qxg2 f5 when it is Black who has the better structure) 26...Nxg2 27 Qxc5 Rxc5 28 Re7 Nf4 with an unclear ending.

**26 f4**

White wants to prevent ...f4 by Black. After 26 Be4 f4 (26...fxe4 27 Qxe3 is equal) 27 g3 Qa5 28 gxf4 Black can play 28...Nc4 or 28...Ng2!? with chances for both sides.

**26...Qd4**

Both 26...Re6 and 26...a5 were worth considering as well.

**27 g3 Re6**

Black threatens ...Nc4!.

**28 Qd2 Ng4**

Black could also wait on this and play 28...Kg7.

**29 h3**

Here Golubev suggests 29 Rxe6 fxe6 30 h3 with the idea 30...Nf2 31 Bc4! Qxc4 32 Qd8+ Kg7 33 Qe7+ with a draw.

**29...Rxe1+ 30 Qxe1 Nf2 31 Bf1 Ne4 (Diagram 27)**

Black still has a little pressure as he controls the centre and his queen and knight coordinate well.

**32 Bg2 b6 33 c3**

White's problems are not over after 33 Bxe4 fxe4.

**33...Qd3 34 g4 Ng3 35 b3**

White should avoid 35 Qe8+? Kg7 36 Qe5+ Kh6 37 g5+ Kh5 when Black's king is quite safe... and White's is not.

**35...Ne2+**

Again Black had some useful quiet moves, such as 35...Kf8!? or 35...h5!?

**36 Kb2 Kf8**

Instead 36...Nxf4 leads to a draw after 37 Qe8+ Kg7 38 Qe5+ Kf8 39 Qxf4 Qe2+ 40 Ka3 Qxg2 41 Qb8+.

**37 Bc6 fxg4**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

A sharp possibility is 37...g5!? as suggested by Ward. After 38 fxg5 f4 the f-pawn is dangerous, although there is nothing clear.

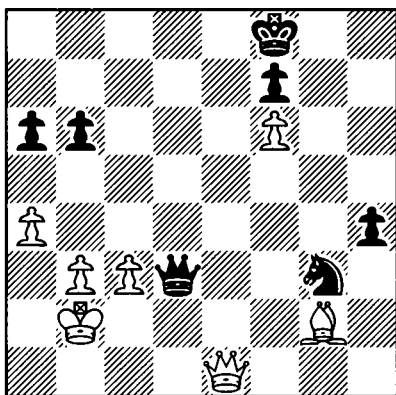
**38 hxg4 h5**

Not 38...Nxf4? 39 Qe8+ Kg7 40 Qe5+, picking up the knight.

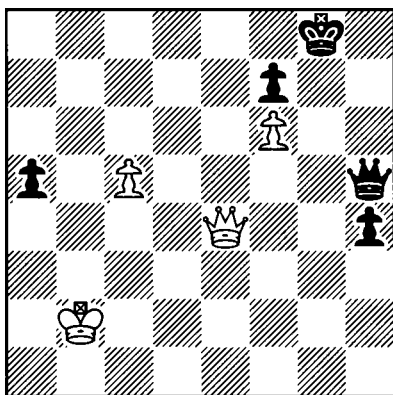
**39 gxh5 gxh5 40 a4 a6 41 f5 h4 42 Bg2 Ng3**

And here not 42...h3? 43 Bxh3.

**43 f6 (Diagram 28)**



**Diagram 28 (B)**



**Diagram 29 (B)**

**43...Qd6**

Instead 43...Qe2+ 44 Qxe2 Nxe2 45 Bf1 Ng3 46 Bxa6 h3 47 Bb7 h2 48 b4 Ke8 (but not 48...h1Q? 49 Bxh1 Nxh1 50 a5 bxa5 51 bxa5 and White wins) 49 a5 bxa5 50 bxa5 Kd7 51 a6 Kc7 52 c4 h1Q 53 Bxh1 Nxh1 is a draw, as White will be able to eliminate Black's last pawn: for example, 54 c5 (54 Kc3 Kb6 55 Kd4 Kxa6 56 Kd5 Ng3! is not so simple) 54...Nf2 55 Kc3 Ne4+ 56 Kd4 Nxf6 57 Ke5 Ng4+ 58 Kf5 Nh6+ 59 Kf6 Kc6 60 a7 Kb7 61 c6+ Kxa7 62 Ke7 Kb6 63 Kd7 Ng4 64 c7 Ne5+ 65 Kd8 Nc6+ 66 Ke8 Kxc7 67 Kxf7 as given by A.Shulz.

**44 Qf2 Kg8 45 b4 a5 46 bxa5**

White immediately creates his own passed pawn. Instead 46 b5 Qd3!? is not so simple.

**46...bxa5 47 Kc2 Kh7 48 c4**

There is no counterattack after 48 Be4+ Kh6 (not 48...Nxe4 49 Qxh4+) 49 Bd3 (or 49



9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1

c4 Kg5 50 c5 Qxf6 51 Qd2+ Qf4) 49...Kg5 when Black wins the f6-pawn.

**48...Qa3! 49 Be4+ Kg8 50 Qf4 Qxa4+ 51 Kd2 Nxe4+ 52 Qxe4 Qa2+ 53 Kc3**

After 53 Ke3 Qa3+ will pick up the f-pawn. If 54 Kf4? Qg3+ 55 Kf5 Qg6+ wins.

**53...Qa1+ 54 Kb3 Qd1+?**

Carlsen wants his queen behind his h-pawn, but this is risky. It was much better to eliminate the dangerous f-pawn with the simple 54...Qxf6.

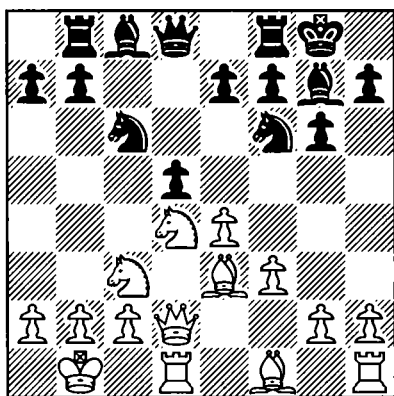
**55 Kb2 Qh5 56 c5 (Diagram 29) 56...h3**

Carlsen almost played 56...Qxc5?? 57 Qg2+! (he must have originally only considered 57 Qg4+) when Black is suddenly getting mated! Now Black is the one trying to hold, but Carlsen managed to compose himself and held on:

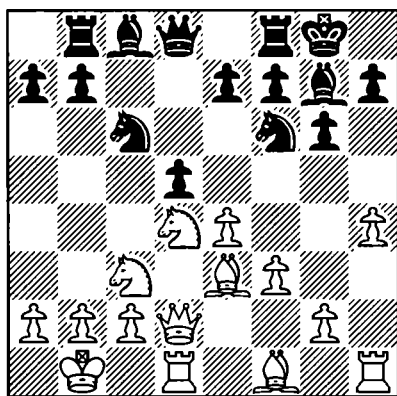
**57 c6 a4 58 Ka2 Qd1 59 Qe8+ Kh7 60 Qxf7+ Kh6 61 c7 Qc2+ 62 Ka3 h2 63 Qg7+ Kh5 64 Qh8+ Kg6 65 Qg8+ Kxf6 66 c8Q Qxc8 67 Qxc8 h1Q 68 Qa6+ Ke5 69 Qb5+ Qd5 70 Kxa4 Qxb5+ 71 Kxb5 ½-½**

### Game 38 L.Nisipeanu-M.Carlsen Medias 2010

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1 Rb8!?** (Diagram 30)



**Diagram 30 (W)**



**Diagram 31 (B)**



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Black responds with a semi-waiting move of his own. By playing 10...Rb8, he deters White from capturing on c6, as the recapture ...bxc6 would leave the rook looking down a half-open b-file at White's king.

This 'mysterious rook move' is reminiscent of Suba's invention in the English Opening: 1 c4 c5 2 Nf3 Nf6 3 Nc3 Nc6 4 g3 e6 5 Bg2 d5 6 cxd5 Nxd5 7 O-O Be7 8 d4 O-O 9 Rb1!. White has many possibilities now and it is hardly clear which move is best.

### **11 Ndb5**

This has been the most popular response. It looks principled in a way – White pressures both d5 and the newly weakened a-pawn. Still, this move looks a little vague to me and I think in the future White will delve into the alternatives. There are several choices, although some of them can be quickly dismissed:

a) 11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 Bxa7 is possible, but Black has good play after 12...Rb7.

b) 11 Bf4?! runs into 11...e5! 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bxe5 Nxe4!.

c) 11 Bb5?! e5 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bxa7 (if 13 Bxc6 d4) 13...Ra8 14 Bxc6 Rxa7 15 Nxd5 Nxd5 16 Bxd5 Qb6 and the piece clearly outweighed the three pawns in K.Nikhilesh-L.Trent, Heraklion 2004.

d) 11 Qf2?! e5 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bxa7 Rb7 is good for Black: for example, 14 Ba6 (no better are 14 Qc5? d4 when Black threatens ...Nd7, as in K.Bolding-J.Fluvia Poyatos, L'Estartit 2008, or 14 Bc5 Qa5 with good attacking chances in S.Sulskis-V.Sakalauskas, Siauliai 2005) 14...Rxa7 (also good is 14...Rxb2+ 15 Kxb2 Bxa6 with excellent compensation for the exchange) 15 Qxa7 Qa5 16 exd5 cxd5 17 Rhe1 was R.Young-G.Shahade, New York (rapid) 2002. Now 17...d4! 18 Nb5 Bxa6 with the idea of 19 Rxe5 Nd7! is very strong.

e) 11 g4 e5! 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 Bc5 (instead 13 Bxa7 Ra8 13 exd5 Nxd5 14 Nxd5 cxd5 15 Qxd5 Qxd5 16 Rxd5 e4! works for Black because the f3-pawn is loose) 13...d4 14 Bxf8 Qxf8 15 Ne2 Qa3 16 b3 Be6 17 Qc1 Qd6 and Black had good compensation for the exchange in H.Muehlenweg-L.Da Costa Junior, correspondence 2003.

f) 11 h4 is logical (**Diagram 31**).

White has had enough with the shadow boxing and makes a move that is clearly in the spirit of the Yugoslav Attack. Black has:

f1) 11...e5 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 Nxd5 (White should avoid 14 Bh6?! Bxh6 15 Qxh6 d4!) 14...Nxd5 (14...Be6!?) 15 Qxd5 Qc7 16 Qc5 Qb7 17 b3 Bf5 18 Bd3 when it looks like Black does not have enough for the pawn.

f2) 11...h5 12 Be2 e5!? looks like a better version of the pawn sacrifice: 13 Nxc6 bxc6 14 exd5 cxd5 15 Nxd5 Be6 16 Bc4 (16 Nxf6+ Qxf6 17 Bg5 Qf5 18 g4 hxg4 19 fxg4 Qe4 is unclear) 16...Nxd5 17 Bxd5 Bxd5 18 Qxd5 Qc7 19 Qc5 was drawn here in M.Emelyanov-A.Ljubicic, correspondence 2008. After 19...Qb7 20 b3 Rfc8 Black obviously has some compensation.

g) 11 Be2!? e5 12 Nxc6 bxc6 13 exd5 cxd5 14 Nxd5 Be6 (14...Nxd5 15 Qxd5 looks insufficient for Black after 15...Qxd5 16 Rxd5 e4 17 b3 or 15...Qc7 16 Qd6) 15 Nxf6+ Qxf6 16 Bg5 Qf5 17 b3 (if 17 g4 Black has the fantastic 17...Rxb2+! 18 Kxb2 e4+ with a huge attack after 19 Kc1 Qe5 20 c3 Rc8 or 19 c3 Rb8+ 20 Kc2 Qa5) 17...e4 gives Black good play. After 18 Qf4 Qc5 19 Bf6 exf3 20 Bxf3? Rb4 White lost material in J.Hager-G.Braun, Oberhof 2010.

h) 11 Nb3 has been played quite frequently, but it does not look too threatening. Black has a choice:

h1) 11...dxe4 12 Qxd8 Rxd8 13 Rxd8+ Nxd8 14 Bxa7 Ra8 15 Bb6 Bf5 has been seen several times. Black is no worse in this unclear endgame.

h2) 11...e6!? 12 exd5 Nxd5 13 Nxd5 exd5 14 Qxd5 Qf6 15 Bd4 (forced, as ...Rd8 was a big threat) 15...Nxd4 16 Qxd4 and now the ending after 16...Qxd4 17 Nxd4 Rd8 18 c3 Bxd4 19 cxd4! (but not 19 Rxd4?! Bf5+ 20 Kc1 Rxd4 21 cxd4 Rc8+! when Black get a nice initiative) is not very pleasant, so Black could instead try 16...Qc6 or 16...Qg5 with the bishop pair and reasonable play for the pawn.

Returning to 11 Ndb5:

### **11...a6 12 Na7**

The knight goes on quite an adventure. I distinctly remember watching this game live and wondering if it would get marooned on a7. Although the knight can exchange itself for either Black's queen bishop or knight, both exchanges could easily favour Black. Taking the knight strengthens Black's centre, while capturing the bishop helps Black's development.

### **12...e6 (Diagram 32)**

Black fortifies his position in the centre.

### **13 g4**

This move not only initiates possible kingside play, but White may fight for the centre with g4-g5. There are a few alternatives to explore:

a) 13 f4 Qe7 (13...Qc7!?) 14 e5 Nd7 15 g3 Nc5?! (this just wastes time; instead Black could consider 15...Rd8, 15...Ra8!?, or 15...Nxa7 16 Bxa7 Ra8 17 Bd4 b5) 16 Qf2 Nd7 was D.Recuerdo Guerra-E.Blomqvist, Chotowa 2010. Here the straightforward 17 h4! looks good for White.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

b) 13 h4 Qc7 14 exd5 (after 14 h5 d4 15 Bxd4 Black must avoid 15...Rd8? 16 Nxc6 bxc6 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Bb6! and instead play 15...Nxd4 16 h6!? Nxf3 17 gxf3 Bh8 18 Nxc8 Rbxc8 with good play) 14...Nxd5 15 Nxd5 exd5 16 Nxc6 (White should investigate 16 Nxc8!? Rbxc8 17 h5) 16...bxc6 17 Bd4 Bxd4 18 Qxd4 c5 19 Qd2 (or 19 Qxd5 Be6 20 Qg5 Rb6) 19...Be6 20 h5 d4 and Black had good play in A.Naiditsch-G.Guseinov, Istanbul 2003.

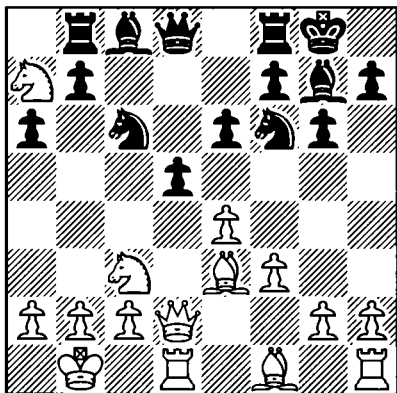


Diagram 32 (W)

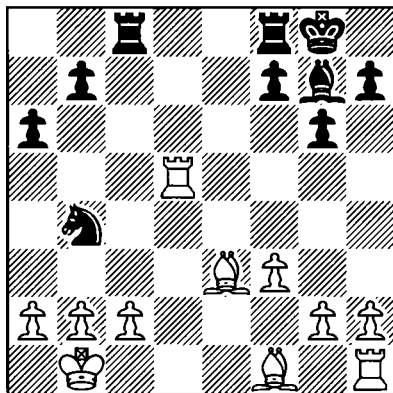


Diagram 33 (W)

c) 13 exd5 Nxd5 (instead 13...exd5 allows White the interesting possibility 14 Na4!?) 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 Nxc6?! (15 Qxd5? Qxd5 16 Rxd5 Re8 leads to trouble, while 15 Nxc8 transposes to variation 'd') 15...bxc6 16 Bd4 Bxd4 17 Qxd4 Qe7 18 Bd3 Rb4 and Black had the initiative in A.David-A.Summerscale, Tel Aviv 1997.

d) White can simplify and grab a pawn, but he falls behind in development after 13 Nxc8 Rxc8 (also worth considering is 13...Qxc8!? 14 exd5 exd5 15 Bg5, as in F.Caruana-D.Daulyte, Arvier 2007; here 15...d4! looks fine for Black) 14 exd5 Nxd5 15 Nxd5 exd5 16 Qxd5 (16 Bh6 Bxh6 17 Qxh6 Qf6 is fairly level) 16...Qxd5 17 Rxd5 Nb4 (**Diagram 33**).

This is the justification for Black's pawn sacrifice. Now 18 Rc5 (not 18 Rd2? Rfe8! when Black is already better; if 19 Bf2 Bh6!) 18...Rce8 19 Bd2 Rd8 20 Bd3 Nxd3 21 cxd3 Rxd3 reaches a completely level ending.

Returning to 13 g4 (**Diagram 34**):

### 13...Re8!

This is an excellent move. Black increases the tension in the centre. Others:

a) 13...Ra8 forces the exchange of knights, but after 14 Nxc6 bxc6 Black's rook is no longer on the b-file and 15 h4 leaves White well ahead.

b) 13...Bd7 14 g5 d4 15 gxf6 dxe3 16 Qxe3 (but not 16 Qxd7 Qxf6 when Black threatens ...Rfd8 and 17 Qd3 Nxa7 18 Qxe3 Nc6 leaves him clearly better) 16...Bxf6 17 Nxc6 bxc6 18 e5 was drawn here in A.Andreou-A.Pavlidis, Porto Carras 2009, but White has a nice edge as the black bishops are very passive.

c) 13...Qc7 14 g5 d4 15 Bf4 e5 16 gxf6 dxc3 17 Qxc3 Bxf6 18 Bh6 (White also had some advantage after 18 Nxc6 bxc6 19 Be3 in A.Kosteniuk-I.Gaponenko, Ohrid 2009) 18...Re8 (White was a little better after 18...Rd8 19 Bxa6 Be6 20 Nxc6 bxc6 21 Bc4 in S.Petrosian-R.Polzin, German League 2007) 19 Bxa6 Be6 (19...Ra8!?) 20 Nxc6 Ra8 21 Bc4 Qxc6 22 Bxe6 Qxc3 (instead 22...Qxe6 23 Qb3 Qh3 looks like a better try) 23 Bxf7+ Kxf7 24 bxc3 leaves Black with insufficient compensation for the pawns. After 24...g5 25 Rhg1 Rg8? 26 Rd7+ White was winning in J.Becerra Rivero-P.Charbonneau, U.S. League (internet) 2005, since 26...Kg6 fails to 27 Bxg5 Bxg5 28 h4.

#### 14 g5 Nh5 (Diagram 35)

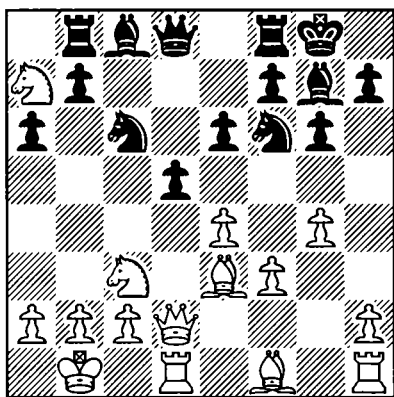


Diagram 34 (B)

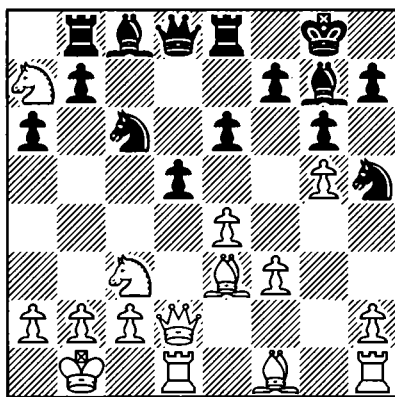


Diagram 35 (W)

Not 14...Nd7? 15 exd5 exd5 16 Nxd5 when White has an extra pawn and a dominant position.

#### 15 Bf2?!

White removes the bishop from the gaze of the e8-rook, but this move is slow. Alternatives:

a) 15 Bc5 was mentioned by Golubev. After 15...Qa5 (if 15...Bd7?! 16 exd5 exd5 17

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

Nxd5 Be6? 18 Nxc6 bxc6 19 Ne7+ wins for White) 16 Qe3 Black has:

a1) 16...Bxc3 17 Qxc3 Qxc3 18 bxc3 is probably about equal, but White may be happy with the potential of the bishop pair.

a2) 16...d4!? 17 Nxc6 Qxc5 18 Nxd4 Rd8 19 Nf5 Rxd1+ 20 Nxd1 Qxe3 21 Nfxe3 h6!? with some compensation for the pawn according to Golubev. I think Black could consider staying in the middlegame with 18...b6!? or 18...Be5!? when Black's control of the dark squares gives him decent compensation for the pawn.

b) 15 exd5 exd5 16 Nxd5 Be6 17 c4 Qd7 gives Black good compensation for the pawn. After 18 Be2 there is:

b1) 18...Bf5+ 19 Ka1 Rxe3?! is a creative idea that unfortunately does not work after 20 Qxe3 Re8 21 Qf2 Nxa7 22 Nf6+ Nxf6 23 gxf6!, as in R.Barski-A.Pavlidis, Chotowa 2010.

b2) 18...b5! puts pressure on both of White's knights: 19 Nxc6 Qxc6 is very good for Black, as 20 cxb5? loses to 20...Qxd5 21 Qxd5 Bxd5 22 Rxd5 Rxe3.

c) 15 Nxc8 d4! and now:

c1) 16 Bf2?! and now Jones's 16...dxc3! (this is even better than 16...Rxc8) 17 Qxd8 Rxd8 18 Rxd8+ Nxd8 19 Nd6 b5! leaves White's knight in trouble.

c2) The funny move 16 Nd6! looks like White's best chance at this point. Black has:

c21) 16...dxe3 17 Qxe3 is no good. The e8-rook is hanging and Nxf7 is threatened.

c22) 16...dxc3 17 Qe1 cxb2 sacrifices the exchange, but 18 Nxe8 Qxe8 19 f4 with the idea of e5 looks insufficient for Black.

c23) 16...Qxd6 17 Ne2 Qc7 18 Bf2 Be5 19 Bg3 Rbc8 20 f4 Bg7 21 e5 Bf8 with an unclear position in J.Bernal Caamano-J.Canamas Soler, correspondence 2008.

c24) 16...Re7!? 17 Bxd4 Bxd4 18 Ne2 Bc5 looks like good compensation for a pawn. Black threatens ...Rd7 and after 19 f4 e5 20 Bh3 Qc7 White also has to worry about ...Rd8.

### **15...Bd7!**

This is good, but Jones's suggestion of 15...Qa5 is interesting too.

### **16 exd5 exd5 (Diagram 36) 17 Qxd5**

Black also has good play if White takes the pawn with the knight. After 17 Nxd5 Be6 18 c4 (if 18 Bc4 Ne5) 18...Bf5+ 19 Ka1 Ra8! 20 Nxc6 bxc6 21 Nc3 Qa5 (21...Bxc3 22 bxc3 Qa5 is also possible) 22 Ne4 Rad8! (22...Red8 23 Bd3 Qe5 24 Qc2 Rab8 is similar) 23 Bd3 Qe5 24 Qc2 Rb8 25 Nc3 Bxd3 26 Rxd3 Qxg5 Black had regained the pawn and kept some initiative in K.Yap-J.Vakhidov, Bandar Seri Begawan 2011.

**17...Ne5 18 Qb3?!**

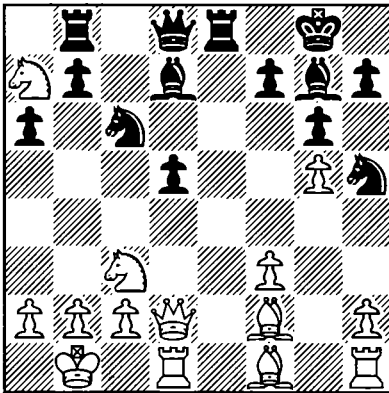
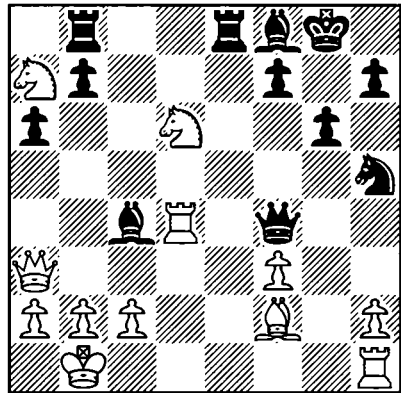
White gives back the pawn, but he will still suffer. Instead 18 h4 Qc7 19 Qd6 Qxd6 20 Rxd6 Bf5 (or 20...Be6) leaves Black with more than enough compensation because of the marooned a7-knight.

**18...Qxg5**

With material equality restored, Black is clearly better.

**19 Ne4 Qf4 20 Be2 Be6 21 Qa3 Nc4**

Black grabs the bishop pair. Carlsen has calculated that the subsequent fork on d6 will not help White.

**22 Bxc4 Bxc4 23 Nd6 Bf8 24 Rd4 (Diagram 37) 24...Qe5****Diagram 36 (W)****Diagram 37 (B)**

This is good, but with White's pieces all so awkwardly placed, Black had the stronger 24...Qg5! with the idea 25 Rxc4? Qg2.

**25 Rxc4 Bxd6**

And here 25...Qe2! was better. I imagine Carlsen had worked things out when he played 21...Nc4 and was simply playing what he had calculated.

**26 Qd3 Bf8 27 a4**

It is difficult to offer advice. If 27 Re4 Qd6 28 Qxd6 (28 Rd4? Qb6) 28...Bxd6 Black is much better, again because of the a7-knight.

**27...Rbd8 28 Qb3 Qd5 29 Rc3**

If 29 Rc7 Qxb3 30 cxb3 Re2 31 Rc2 Black wins material with 31...Rxf2! 32 Rxf2 Bc5.

**29...Qd2**

With Nisipeanu in time pressure, Carlsen keeps the tension and goes for a quick kill. The endings arising after 29...Qxb3 30 Rxb3 Re2 and 29...Re2 30 Qxd5 Rxd5 31 Bb6 Nf6 were promising as well.

**30 Be3**

The attack on f7 with 30 Rc7 is easily parried by 30...Re6 or 30...Rd7.

**30...Qe2**

The immediate 30...Qg2 was faster, but this is certainly good enough.

**31 Bb6?**

This is a blunder, but 31 Bc1 Qg2 is pretty hopeless.

**31...Rd1+ 0-1**

Black wins after 32 Rxd1 Qxd1+ 33 Ka2 Re1 34 Qc4 Qa1+ 35 Kb3 Rb1.

## **Conclusion**

Although 10 Kb1 is popular, I do not see any serious problems for Black. The queen sacrifice arising after 12...Bxf6 is very solid, although Black does risk being squeezed. The more modern 12...exf6 looks fine too, but Black should know something about the strange 'queen vs. three minor pieces' positions that may arise. Lastly, 10...Rb8 looks quite playable and if 10 Kb1 retains its popularity (which I tend to doubt), this young variation can expect further developments.



# Chapter Nine

## 9 0-0-0 Nxd4 and 9...Bd7

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 (Diagram 1)

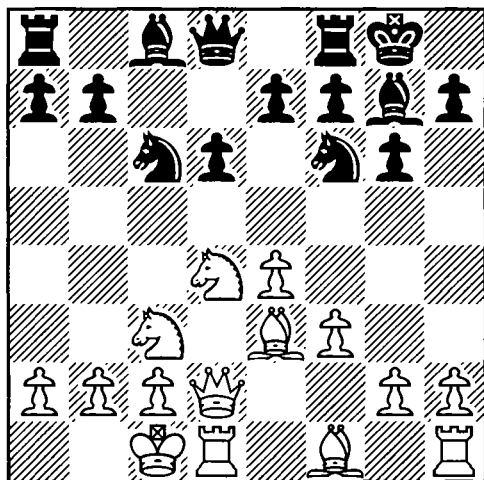


Diagram 1 (B)

In this chapter we look at lines where Black avoids 9...d5. In Game 39 we look at 9...Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Be6. The play that follows is very natural and is relatively easy to

understand. While I would hesitate to call this line refuted, White does have several promising options and it is difficult to find anything for Black that even resembles equality.

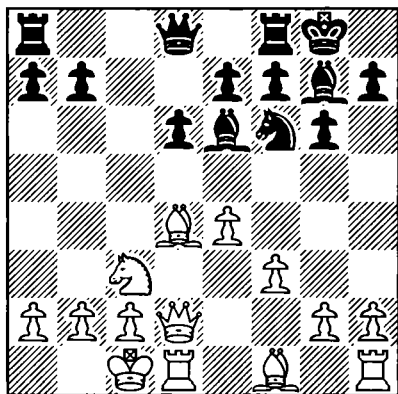
The final two games of the chapter cover the combative 9...Bd7. This line has generally had an even worse reputation than 9...Nxd4, but here the play is at least more complicated. Game 40 shows the possibilities that Black has against straightforward play, while in Game 41 we look at various lines where White plays an early Be2. There are several different move orders that White can use and it is these lines with Be2 which threaten the viability of Black's position.

**Game 39**  
**O.Paetzold-G.Evans**  
**Correspondence 2007**

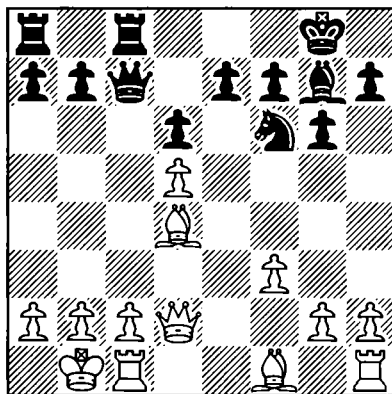
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 Nxd4**

I used to play this line quite a bit myself. The play is much simpler for Black than it is in the 9...d5 lines, but so is White's. Unfortunately for Black there are multiple ways for White to seek an advantage.

**10 Bxd4 Be6 (Diagram 2)**



**Diagram 2 (W)**



**Diagram 3 (B)**

**11 Kb1!**

This is the real test of Black's system. Other moves are possible of course, but this move essentially gains a tempo and is clearly best.

**11...Qc7**

The main point is that 11...Qa5? is bad because of 12 Nd5.

**12 h4**

Instead 12 g4 Rfc8 13 h4 is equally popular. We will consider this position after the alternate move order 12 h4 Rfc8 13 g4. White also has two other ways to seek an advantage:

a) 12 Nd5 Bxd5 13 exd5 Rfc8 (Black can also consider 13...Rac8 with the idea 14 c4?! b5 or 14 Rc1 a6 15 g4 e6!? 16 dxe6 fxe6 when the position is less clear) 14 Rc1 (**Diagram 3**) is a very simple way to play.

Black is not in any immediate danger here, but White has the bishop pair and more space, so he can aspire to a small plus by advancing on the kingside:

a1) 14...Nd7 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 h4 h5 17 g4 Nf6 18 g5 (18 Bh3 looks good too) 18...Nd7 19 f4 gives White a clear advantage, as he has more space and can advance on the kingside.

a2) 14...a5 15 Bb5! a4 16 c4 Nd7 17 Bxg7 Kxg7 18 h4 gave White a similar advantage in K.Georgiev-C.Ward, Gibraltar 2005.

a3) 14...a6 15 g4 b5 16 g5 Nh5 17 Bxg7 Nxg7 18 Bh3 (the immediate 18 h4 is also possible) dominates the g7-knight and plans Bg4 and h4-h5.

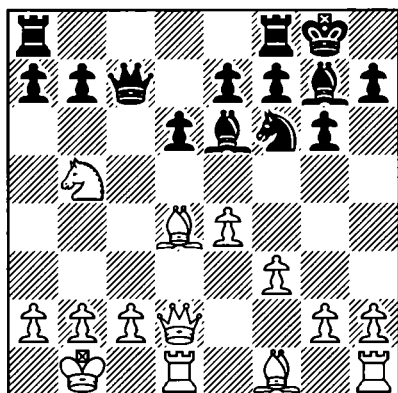
a4) 14...Qd7 is relatively best, as the queen is not doing anything on the c-file and from here it can watch both sides of the board: 15 g4 b5 16 h4 (or 16 g5) 16...Qb7 17 c4 bxc4 18 Bxc4 Rc7 19 b3 and White had a slight advantage in M.Ginsburg-J.Van de Mortel, U.S. League (internet) 2008.

b) 12 Nb5!? (**Diagram 4**) is an unusual and fresh idea.

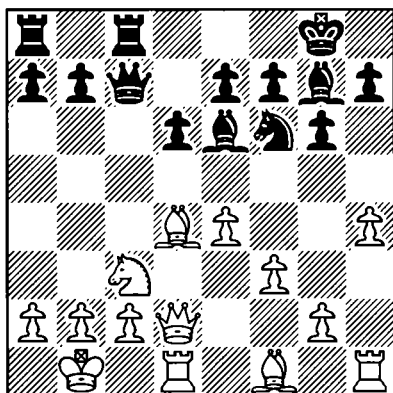
There are two points to this move. After the black queen moves, if Black then plays ...a6 and the knight goes back to c3, White will have wasted two moves while Black will have spent two tempi on ...a6 and moving his queen. Considering the squares the black queen can go to look inferior to where it sits now on c7, White hopes that the mutual wasting of two tempi will leave Black's queen on a worse square. If the queen returns to c7, then White will essentially have played a useful move (like h4), with Black responding with the less useful ...a6. The other idea is to change the nature of the position by playing Bd4-e3 and Nb5-d4. Black has some choice:

b1) 12...Qb8?! 13 h4 (White could also try 13 Be3, while Andrei Sokolov has had success with 13 g4 a6 14 Nc3 b5 15 h4) 13...h5 (after 13...a6 14 Nc3 Black's queen is on a passive square) 14 g4! hxg4 15 h5 gxf3 16 h6! Nxe4 17 hxg7 Nxd2+ 18 Rxd2 f6 19 gxf8Q+ Qxf8 and now 20 Nc7 was good enough in V.Iordachescu-F.Braga,

Bratto 2010, but 20 Rdh2! would have been even more convincing.



**Diagram 4 (B)**



**Diagram 5 (W)**

b2) 12...Qd7 13 Be3!? (White must avoid 13 Nxa7? Rxa7 14 Bxa7 Qa4, but 13 h4 and 13 g4 are alternatives) 13...Rfc8 14 g4 a6 15 Nd4 Bc4 16 h4 Bxf1 17 Rdx f1 Rc4 18 h5 gave White a strong attack in B.Smith-M.Milenkovic, Paracin 2011. It is interesting that Smith chose this line, as he is a well known Dragon specialist from the black side.

b3) 12...Qc6 13 h4 (again 13 Nxa7? fails to 13...Rxa7 14 Bxa7 Qa4, but 13 Be3!? a6 14 Nd4 Qd7 15 g4 b5 16 h4 left White well ahead in A.Shabalov-A.Almeida Saenz, Oak Brook 2007) 13...a6 14 Nc3 b5 15 h5 b4 and now 16 Ne2 Rfc8 gave Black sufficient counterplay in J.Smeets-Le Quang, Dresden Olympiad 2008, but instead 16 Nd5! looks very strong. If 16...Nxd5 17 Bxg7 Nc3+ 18 bxc3 Rfb8 19 c4! would refute Black's play and White has a winning attack after 19...Kxg7 20 hxg6.



**WARNING:** While 9...Nxd4 is an easy line to understand conceptually, it faces threats from several directions. When that happens in an opening variation, it is usually time to look at other lines!

Returning to 12 h4:

### **12...Rfc8 (Diagram 5) 13 g4**

This can also arise after 12 g4 Rfc8 13 h4 as mentioned before. Instead 13 h5! is considered in the next game.

### 13...Qa5 14 Qg5

White looks for a plus in an endgame. Instead 14 Nd5 Qxd2 15 Rxd2 (after 15 Nxf6+ Bxf6 16 Rxd2 Bxd4 17 Rxd4 both 17...Rc5 and 17...h6 are fine for Black) 15...Nxd5 16 exd5 (if 16 Bxg7?! Nb4!) 16...Bxd5!? 17 Bxg7 Bxf3 18 Rh3 Bxg4 19 Rg3 Kxg7 20 Rxg4 f5 gives Black good chances in the ending.

White has a more significant alternative in 14 a3 Rab8 and then:

a) 15 Nd5 Qxd2 16 Rxd2 is a slightly improved ending for White, as he already has h4 in and Black's a7-pawn can come under attack. Black has:

a1) 16...Nxd5 17 Bxg7 and now both 17...Kxg7 18 exd5 Bd7 19 Rd4 and 17...Ne3 18 Bd4 Nxf1 19 Rxf1 give White slightly favourable versions of typical endings in this line, because h4 is more useful than ...Rab8.

a2) 16...Bxd5 17 exd5 (now Black must spend a tempo dealing with the attack on his a-pawn) 17...a6 18 h5 Nd7 19 g5 Bxd4 20 Rxd4 Rc5 21 Bh3 Ne5 22 f4 was K.Müller-R.Polzin, German League 2002. White's active pieces and space advantage give him lasting pressure in the ending.

b) 15 h5 b5 is similar to the main line, except White has played g4 and Black has ...Rab8 in. This would seem to favour Black and it probably does, but White can still look for a small advantage:

b1) 16 hxg6 hxg6 (after 16...fxg6 White should avoid 17 g5 b4! and instead play 17 Qg5!) 17 Qg5 Qc7 18 e5 is similar to the main line of Game 40, but White has played g4 instead of Bd3, so Black's chances greatly increase as there is no sacrifice on g6 and the c-pawn can become a target:

b11) 18...dxe5?! 19 Bxe5 Qb6 (19...Qc5? loses to 20 Bxf6 Bxf6 21 Rd8+!) 20 Bxb8 Rxb8 looks insufficient.

b12) 18...Ne4!? 19 fxe4 dxe5 with the idea of ...b4 gives Black two pawns and some counterplay for the piece.

b13) 18...Nd5! looks fine for Black. After 19 exd6 Nxc3+ 20 Bxc3 exd6 the weakness of c2 is felt and 21 Bd3 Bxc3 22 bxc3 Qxc3 23 Bxg6 Kf8! will likely lead to one side or the other giving perpetual check.

b2) 16 h6 (**Diagram 6**) is a better try.

This move is counterintuitive, but the advanced pawn can cause problems in both the middlegame and the endgame. Black has:

b21) 16...b4?! complicates, but after 17 Nb5! (17 axb4 Rxb4 18 hxg7 Rxb2+ 19 Kxb2 Qb4+ is a draw) 17...Rxb5 18 Bxb5 Qxb5 19 hxg7 bxa3 20 Qd3! favours White as shown in many games.

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b22) 16...Bh8 and now:

b221) 17 Bxf6 Bxf6 18 Nd5 b4! gives Black excellent play after 19 axb4 Qa4 or 19 Nxf6+ exf6 20 Rh2 Rb6.

b222) 17 g5 b4 18 Nb5 Qa4! 19 Rh2! (worse is 19 gxf6?! bxa3) 19...bxa3 20 b3 Rxb5 21 Bxb5 Qxb5 22 gxf6 exf6 is unclear.

b223) 17 Nd5 Qxd2 18 Rxd2 is less exciting but White should keep a small edge because of the annoying pawn on h6.

Returning to 14 Qg5 (Diagram 7):

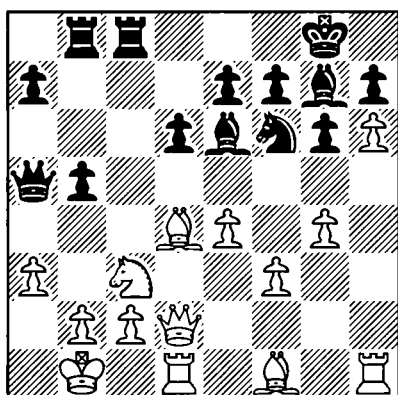


Diagram 6 (B)

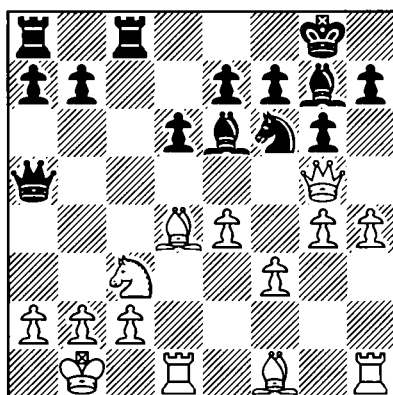


Diagram 7 (B)

### 14...b5!

This is much more in the spirit of the Dragon than 14...Qxg5 15 hxc5 Nd7 16 Bxc7 (16 Rh4 is also possible, while 16 Be2!? Bxd4 17 Rxd4 f6 18 gxf6 Nxf6 19 Nd5 Bxd5 20 exd5 left White with an edge in J.Kraai-M.Khachiyan, Saint Louis 2011)

16...Kxc7 17 Rh4 with hopes for a slight pull in the endgame. White does seem to get a little something after 17...f6 18 gxf6+ Nxf6 19 g5 or 17...Rh8 18 f4 Nb6 19 a4 a5 20 Bb5 Rad8 21 f5, so Black should probably play 17...Nb6 or 17...Rc5 with decent chances to hold.

### 15 Qxb5 Qc7 16 Qa4 Rab8 (Diagram 8) 17 Ba6

This holds up the black a-pawn, but Black has a couple of ways to equalize. Instead 17 Ka1 is considered more testing, but I think Black can hold his own here as well:

a) 17...a5 18 Bb5! Qb7 19 Rb1 favours White: for example, 19...d5 20 g5 Nh5 21 Bxc7 Nxc7 22 exd5 Bxd5 23 Ba6! Qxa6 24 Nxd5 with a big advantage.

b) 17...Bd7 18 Qa3 e5!? and now:

b1) 19 Be3 Bf8 (Black threatens ...d5-d4) 20 Qxa7 (20 Nd5 Nxd5 21 exd5 gives Black good counterplay after 21...Qxc2 or 21...e4) 20...Rb7 21 Qa6 Rxb2! exploits the loose bishop on e3.

b2) 19 Bf2! Bf8 20 Qxa7 Rb7 21 Qe3 is better, although Black still has some counterplay after 21...Rcb8 22 b3 Bxg4!.

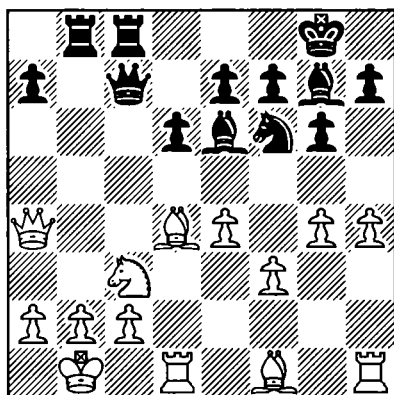
c) 17...Qb7 was Ward's original suggestion. White has:

c1) 18 Rb1 Qb4! 19 Qxb4 Rxb4 gives Black the initiative.

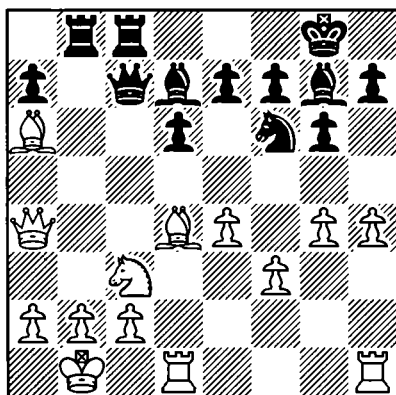
c2) 18 Qa3 should be met with Potkin's suggestion of 18...a5! when ...Qb4 is possible and 19 Bd3 Nd7 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 h5 Ne5 gives Black good counterplay.

c3) 18 b3 and now Ward gives 18...Qb4 19 Kb2 Nxg4 20 Qxb4 Rxb4 21 Bxg7 Nf2 22 Rd4 (!) 22...Rxd4 23 Bxd4 Nxh1. However, 22 a3!? is a subtle improvement and after 22...Rbb8 23 Bd4 Nxh1 24 Ba6 Rc6 25 Bxa7! Rf8 26 Bb5 Rc7 27 Bd4 Ng3 28 a4 White is much better. I think Black can avoid all this, however, with 18...a5! which offers good compensation.

**17...Bd7!? (Diagram 9)**



**Diagram 8 (W)**



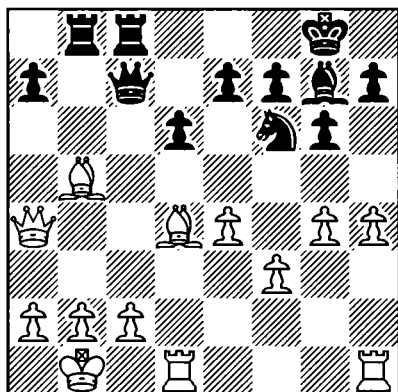
**Diagram 9 (W)**

Also possible is 17...Nxe4 18 Nb5 (18 fxe4? Bxd4 19 Qxd4 Qxc3 is better for Black, while 18 Nxe4 Bd7! forces White to return the piece with 19 Qc4) 18...Rxb5 19 Bxb5 Bxd4 20 Rxd4 (Black has more than enough for the exchange after 20 fxe4 Be5) 20...a6! which causes confusion in the white camp: for example, 21 Be2 (if 21 Bxa6 Nc5, while 21 Bd3 Nd2+ 22 Ka1 Nxf3 also looks fine for Black) 21...Nc5 22 Qb4 Nb3!.

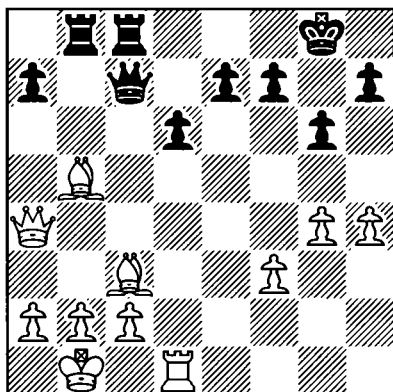
### 18 Nb5

After 18 Qa3 Nxe4! is a typical trick to win back the pawn. After 19 fxe4 (19 Bxc8? Bxd4 is bad, while 19 Bxg7 Nxc3+ 20 Bxc3 Qxc3 is equal) 19...Bxd4 20 Rxd4 Qxc3 21 Qxc3 Rxc3 White was fortunate to have 22 e5! with a level ending in A.Ivanov-A.Pixton, Philadelphia 2001.

### 18...Bxb5 19 Bxb5 (Diagram 10)



**Diagram 10 (B)**



**Diagram 11 (B)**

### 19...Nxe4!

19...Nxg4! is similar, but Ward's suggestion 19...Rxb5 20 Qxb5 Qxc2+ 21 Ka1 Nxe4 could be met with 22 Qd3! (rather than 22 fxe4 Bxd4) 22...Nf2 23 Qxc2 Rxc2 24 Kb1! Re2 25 Rh2! Nxd1 26 Rxe2 Bxd4 27 Rd2 when White is better.

### 20 Bxg7

If 20 fxe4 Bxd4 21 Rxd4 Rxb5! regains the pawn and leaves Black with the better chances, as his pieces are more active and he has a better pawn structure.

### 20...Nf2!

This is stronger than 20...Rxb5 21 Qxe4 Kxg7 22 h5 when White has counterplay. Black has foreseen that his knight will not get trapped.

### 21 Bc3

If 21 Bd4 Nxd1 22 Rxd1 Rxb5 wins. Critical is 21 Rc1 Nxh1 22 Bd4 Ng3. If Black had been concerned about the knight getting trapped, he could have played 19...Nxg4! earlier. In that case White would have a pawn on e4, instead of g4, and the knight could always escape to the h5-square. In fact the knight is not in real danger here



because Black will play ...e5 and ...Qb7, keeping the initiative.

**21...Nxd1 22 Rxd1 (Diagram 11)**

It looks like Black has miscalculated, but there is one final point.

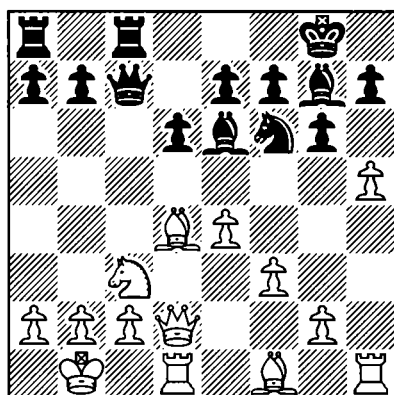
**22...Qc5!**

Black wins a piece because if the b5-bishop moves Black can capture its counterpart on c3.

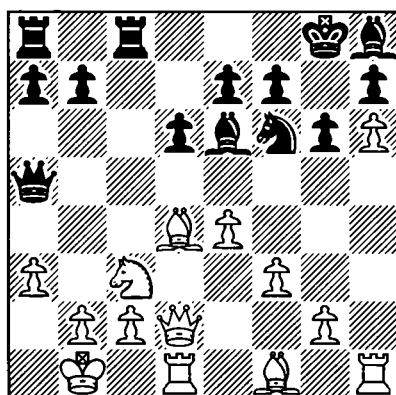
**23 Bd4 Qxb5 24 Qxb5 Rxb5 25 Bxa7 Re5 26 c3 Re2 27 Rd4 Ra8 0-1**

### Game 40 O.Korneev-J.Koch French League 2007

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Be6 11 Kb1 Qc7 12 h4 Rfc8 13 h5! (Diagram 12)**



**Diagram 12 (B)**



**Diagram 13 (B)**

This is really the critical test of Black's set-up.

**13...Qa5**

It is well known that Black loses after 13...Nxf5 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 g4 Nf6 16 Qh6+ Kg8 17 e5! dxe5 18 g5 Nh5 19 Rxh5 gxh5 20 Bd3.

**14 hxg6**

White is mated after 14 Bxf6? Rxc3! 15 Qxc3 Qxa2+ 16 Kc1 Bh6+ and 14 a3 is inaccurate because of 14...Nxf5! 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 g4 Rxc3! (16...Nf6? would transpose

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to the note to Black's 13th move, above) 17 Qxc3+ (or 17 gxh5 Rc5) 17...Qxc3 18 bxc3 when Black has sufficient compensation after 18...Nf4 or 18...Nf6.

White does have an interesting alternative in 14 h6!? Bh8 15 a3 (**Diagram 13**).

This is an even better version of note 'b2' to White's 14th move in our last game. Black has:

a) 15...Rab8 16 Bxf6! exf6 (16...Bxf6 is probably a better try, but Black is clearly going to be grovelling after 17 Nd5 Qxd2 18 Nxf6+ exf6 19 Rxd2) 17 Nd5 and now:

a1) 17...Qxd2 18 Rxd2 Kf8 19 g4 Rc5 20 Ne3 gave White a comfortable advantage in the ending in S.Dolmatov-N.Halyavskiy, Moscow 2006.

a2) 17...Qd8 18 g4 f5?! (a better try for counterplay would be 18...b5 19 Be2 a5) 19 gxf5 Bxd5 20 Qxd5 Qf6 21 c3 left White a pawn up and with the initiative in A.Ivanov-D.Vigorito, New Hampshire 1998.

b) 15...Nd7 16 f4 (instead 16 Nd5 Qxd2 17 Rxd2 Bxd5 18 exd5 Bxd4 19 Rxd4 f5!? was fine for Black in L.Psakhis-C.Ward, Copenhagen 2000; 16 Bxh8 Kxh8 17 Nd5 Qxd2 18 Rxd2 Bxd5 19 exd5 is a little better, but the tempo does not mean much after 19...Kg8) 16...Bxd4 17 Qxd4 Nf6 (if 17...f6 18 Bb5! with the idea of f5 is good for White) 18 f5! gxf5 19 Nd5! Bxd5 20 exd5 Qc5 (20...Kh8 is a better try, but White still has good compensation for the pawn) 21 Qd3 Ne4 (Black's life is also unpleasant after 21...Kh8 22 Qxf5 or 21...Qf2 22 Rh3) and now 22 Re1! Qf2 23 Rxe4 fxe4 24 Qxe4 with the idea of Bd3 gives White excellent chances.

### **14...hgx6**

Black's king is safer after 14...fxg6, but the positional problems will not go away and 15 a3 Rab8 16 Bd3 (other good tries are 16 Nd5, 16 Bxf6, and 16 g4) 16...b5 17 Qg5 Bf7 18 Nd5 has scored very well for White.

### **15 a3 (Diagram 14)**

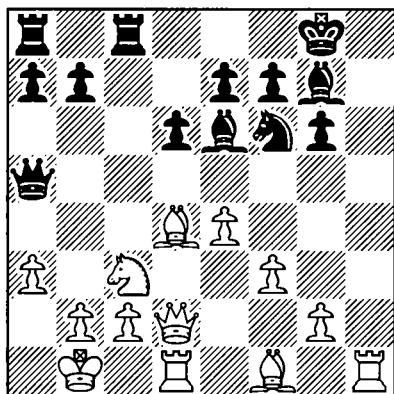
This is the critical position for the 9...Nxd4 line and I have long wondered if Black could survive here. White has several dangerous ideas at his disposal. There are positional threats associated with the exchange Bxf6 followed by Nd5 and of course there are attacking plans with Be3-h6 or g4 and Qh2. In some cases White may even triple on the h-file. Black in turn must either aim for ...b5-b4 or else play on the c-file. Numerous attempts have been made to make Black's position playable, but in general Black's play just seems too slow.

### **15...Rab8**

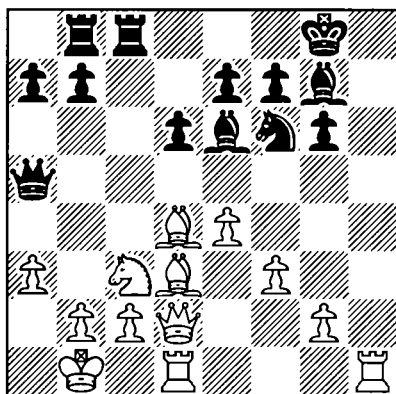
Black can also try to simplify immediately with 15...Bc4 and then:

a) 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 Bxf6 (or 17 Qc1!? which may transpose into the main game)

17...Bxf6 18 Nd5 Qxd2 19 Rxd2 gives White a slight advantage in an ending that is typical for this line.



**Diagram 14 (B)**



**Diagram 15 (B)**

b) 16 Rh3 Bxf1 17 Rxf1 Rc4 and now Golubev mentions both 18 Rfh1 Rac8 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Rh7 Rxc3 21 Qh6 Qe5 22 f4 Rh3! and 18 Qd3! Rac8 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Nd5 Bxb2!. In both cases, Black seems to survive.

c) 16 Bd3!? is rare, but 16...Bxd3 (or 16...b5 17 g4 Rab8 and we are in note 'b' to White's 17th move, below) 17 Qxd3 looks good for White, as Black lacks counter-play.

d) 16 g4! Bxf1 (after 16...b5 both Kosteniuk's 17 g5 Nh5 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 Qd4+ Kg8 20 Bh3, intending Bg4, and Ward's 17 Bxc4 Rxc4 18 Qh2, with the idea of Bxf6 or Nd5, look very strong) 17 Rdx1 Rc4 18 Be3 Rac8 19 Bh6 Bh8 20 Nd5 Qd8 21 Ne3 was good enough for an advantage in A.Kosteniuk-N.Pogonina, Samara 2005. Instead 21 Bf8!? Qxf8 22 Qh2 Nh5 seems to survive for a bit, but 21 Bg5! Bg7 22 Bxf6 exf6 23 c3 with the simple idea of tripling on the h-file looks crushing.

**16 Bd3 (Diagram 15) 16...Bc4**

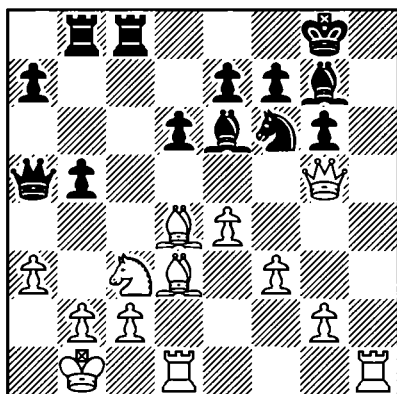


**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** With this move Black tries to exchange pieces to thread his way to equality (usually without success). The main alternative is to launch a counterattack with 16...b5, but after 17 Qg5! (Diagram 16) Black has been struggling to survive for over 25 years.

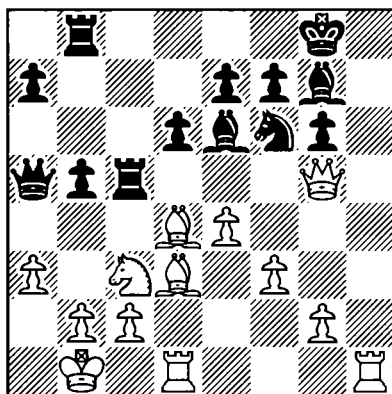
This move pins the b5-pawn to Black's queen, prepares e4-e5, and the queen may

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

go to h4 to head a direct attack. Black has tried just about everything here:



**Diagram 16 (B)**



**Diagram 17 (W)**

a) 17...Qc7 was tried in the stem game: 18 e5 dxe5 19 Bxe5 Qc5 20 f4 Rb7 21 Bxg6! fxc6 22 Qxc6 Bf7 (recently Black tried 22...Bf5 and was crushed after 23 Qxf5 b4 24 axb4 Rxb4 25 Nd5 in Lim Yee Weng-Ziyang Zhang, Kuala Lumpur 2008) 23 Rh8+ 1-0 was the famous game J.Van der Wiel-G.Sax, Plovdiv 1983.

b) 17...Qd8 18 e5! b4 (or 18...dxe5 19 Bxe5 and Bxg6 is coming) 19 axb4 Nd7 20 Bxg6! dxe5 21 Rh7 Qf8 22 Rdh1 and 1-0 was A.Rudolph-H.Romakin, German League 2006.

c) 17...Nh7 18 Rxh7! Bxd4 (Black is quickly mated after 18...Kxh7 19 Rh1+ Kg8 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 Qh6+ Kf6 22 e5+!) 19 Rdh1 Rc5 20 e5 Bxe5 21 Qh6 and 1-0 was more of the same in L.Milov-A.Goebel, Bad Homburg 2006.

d) 17...Bc4 18 Bxc4 Rxc4 19 Nd5! Qd8 (19...Nxd5 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 Qh6+ Kf6 22 Rxd5 wins quickly) 20 Bxf6 (or 20 Qh4, as suggested by Golubev) 20...exf6 21 Qh4 was winning for White in D.Stojanovic-I.Galic, Bihac 2010, as there is no reasonable defence to White's tripling on the h-file.

e) 17...a6 is kind of a nothing move: 18 Rh4 (18 f4!? is also possible) 18...Kf8 (Black tries to run) 19 Rdh1 Ke8 20 Nd5 Bxd5 21 exd5 Kd7 22 Bf5+ gxf5 23 Qxc7 Nxd5 24 Qxf7 b4 25 Qxf5+ Kc6 26 Qe4 e5 (if 26...bxa3 27 c4) 27 Bxe5 dxe5 28 Rd1 Rd8 was Z.Hajnal-I.Tornai, Hungarian League 2003. Here 29 Rh6+ Kb7 30 axb4 would have won quickly.

f) 17...d5 is interesting, but it does not really work after 18 Nxd5 (less clear are 18

exd5?! b4 and 18 e5 b4) 18...Bxd5 19 exd5 b4 20 Bxg6! fxg6 (20...bxa3 21 Rh7!) 21 Qxg6 Qa4 22 Bxf6 exf6 23 Rh7, threatening mate as well as Rdh1, as given by Olt-hof.

g) 17...Rxc3 18 Bxc3 Qa4 is desperate, but Black does threaten ...a5 and ...b4, so White should not relax: 19 Rh4 (19 Qh4 was A.Kovacevic-V.Jianu, Sozina 2004; here 19...b4 20 axb4 Rc8 with the idea of ...Rxc3 would give Black some practical chances) 19...b4 and now:

g1) 20 axb4 Nh7! 21 Rxh7 Bxc3 22 bxc3 Qa3! (Golubev had already pointed this out) 23 Rdh1 Ba2+ 24 Ka1 Bb3+ 25 Kb1 ½-½ D.Solak-U.Cvetanovic, Valjevo 2011.

g2) 20 Bxb4 Nh7 (or 20...Rxb4 21 axb4 Qa2+ 22 Kc1) 21 Rxh7 Kxh7 22 Qh4+ Kg8 23 Qxe7 should win.

g3) 20 e5 Nd5 21 Bd2 leaves Black's b-pawn pinned along the fourth rank and looks the cleanest to me. Now 21...a5 22 Bxg6! Nc3+ 23 Bxc3 bxc3 24 Rdh1 Rxb2+ 25 Kc1 is given by Golubev. Black's queen is hanging and 25...Qxa7 26 Rh8+ Bxh8 27 Bh7+ Kf8 28 Qg8 is mate.

h) 17...Rc5!? (**Diagram 17**) is really desperate, but it is still the most interesting practical try.

After 18 Bxc5 Black has:

h1) 18...b4 and now:

h11) 19 axb4?! Rxb4 20 Be3 Nd5! (also good is 20...Qa3 21 Kc1 Rxb2 22 Kd2 Qxc3+! 23 Ke2 Bc4 as given by Van de Mortel) 21 Kc1 Rxb2! 22 Kd2 Bxc3+ 23 Ke2 Bf6 and Black is winning.

h12) 19 Be3! refutes Black's play: 19...Bf5 (19...Qxg5 20 Bxg5 bxc3 21 b3 just leaves Black down the exchange) 20 Nb5! bxa3 21 exf5 axb2 22 c3! left Black too far behind on material in A.Chow-J.Van de Mortel, Chicago 2005, although he did manage to win on time!

h2) 18...dxc5 19 Qxc5 Nd7 20 Qb4 (Van de Mortel points out 20 Qxe7?! b4 21 axb4? Rxb4 22 Qe8+ Nf8 when Black's attack is winning) 20...Qc7 21 Nd5 Bxd5 22 exd5 Nc5 and now:

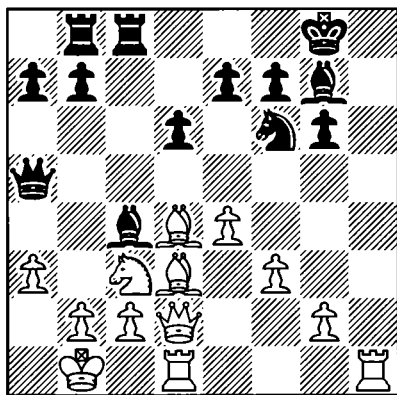
h21) 23 d6!? opens the central files for White's rooks. After 23...exd6 24 Rh4 (24 Rhe1!) 24...a5 25 Qd2 White has b4 under control and following 25...Qe7 26 Rg4 Qf6 27 Qc1 b4 28 axb4 axb4 29 Bc4 Black had little to show for the exchange in R.Swinkels-S.Citak, Gibraltar 2007.

h22) 23 Rhe1 a5 24 Qh4 Bf6 25 Qh6 (Van de Mortel suggests 25 d6 Qxd6 26 Qh6, but then 26...Qg3!? defends g6 and prepares ...b4 with counterplay) 25...Qd6 26 Bxg6! fxg6 27 Qxg6+ Kf8 28 Rh1?! Qe5 29 c3 b4 30 axb4?! (30 Rde1 Qxd5 would be

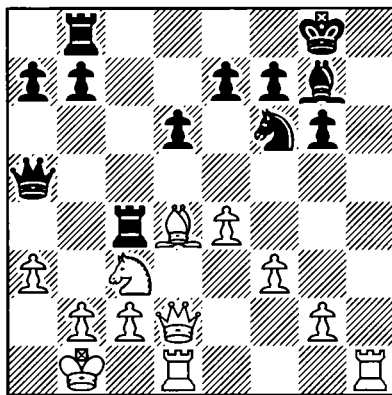
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

unclear) 30...Rxb4! 31 Rd4 Rxd4 32 cxd4 Qxd4 33 Qc2 Qxd5 and by now Black had somewhat the better chances in J.Bartholomew-J.Van de Mortel, U.S. League (internet) 2009.

After that long digression, we return to 16...Bc4 (**Diagram 18**):



**Diagram 18 (W)**



**Diagram 19 (W)**



**WARNING: White has more than one tempting continuation here. Even though there is no clear knockout, Black has many problems to solve.**

### 17 Bxc4

a) 17 Rh2 and now:

a1) 17...Bxd3 18 Qxd3! (18 cxd3 b5 19 Rdh1 e5 20 Be3 b4 21 Na2 may well be good too) 18...b5 19 Bxf6! exf6 20 Nd5 Rb7 21 Rdh1 f5 22 Rh7 b4 23 Rxg7+ Kxg7 24 Qd4+ 1-0 S.Bieszk-B.Higgins, correspondence 2009.

a2) 17...b5 18 Rdh1 e5! (worse is 18...b4?! 19 Bxc4 bxc3 20 Bxc3 Qxa3 21 Bb3) 19 Be3 b4 20 Nd1 (or 20 Na2 Bxa2+ 21 Kxa2 Rc3! – Golubev) 20...Bxd3 21 cxd3 and now Golubev suggests 21...Rb5, while 21...Qa4 and even 21...Nh5 are possible as well.

b) 17 g4 looks like a simple path to some advantage after 17...b5 18 Bxc4 and then:

b1) 18...Rxc4 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Nd5 Qxd2 21 Rxd2 Kg7 22 Rdh2 Rg8 23 Rh7+ Kf8 24 Nxf6 exf6 left White with an obvious edge in the ending in A.Ivanov-D.Vigorito, Las Vegas 1997.

b2) 18...bxc4 19 Ka1 (or 19 Ka2) 19...Rc6 (19...Rb7 20 Rb1) 20 Rh3 Ra6 21 Qc1 is

given by Golubev. Black has no counterplay.

c) 17 Be3 is popular and scores well:

c1) 17...b5? 18 Bh6 Bh8 19 Bf8! Rxf8 (19...Nh5 20 Rxh5 Bxc3 21 Qh6! Bxd3 22 Rxd3 gxf5 23 bxc3 Rxf8 24 f4 h4 25 Qg5+ 1-0 was Goh Wei Ming-Le Quang Long, Vung Tau 2008) 20 Rxh8+ Kxh8 21 Qh6+ Kg8 22 Nd5! Bxd5 23 Rh1 Nh5 24 exd5 with the idea of Rxh5 wins for White.

c2) 17...Nd7 18 Bxc4 Rxc4 (not 18...Bxc3? 19 Bd4!) 19 Nd5 Qxd2 20 Rxd2 Re8 (20...e6? 21 b3! wins the exchange) 21 Bxa7 b6 22 Rd3 Ra4 23 Bxb6 e6 24 Bc7 exd5 25 Rxd5 Ne5 26 Bxd6 Nc4 27 c3 was J.Cordovil-M.Lecroq, correspondence 1994. White has four pawns for the piece and is probably a little better, but the position is not so clear.

c3) 17...Bxd3!? 18 cxd3 (18 Qxd3!?) 18...b5 (not 18...Ng4? 19 fxg4 Rxc3 20 bxc3 Bxc3 21 Rh8+! Kxh8 22 Bd4+, as in S.Shankland-R.Harper, New York 2009) 19 Bh6 Bh8 and now:

c31) 20 Bf8?! Nh5 (not 20...Rxf8? 21 Rxh8+ Kxh8 22 Qh6+ Kg8 23 Nd5) 21 Rxh5 (21 Bxe7 Bxc3 is fine for Black, but this is still preferable) 21...Bxc3 22 bxc3 was P.Hody-R.Honhon, Belgian League 2005. Now 22...Qxc3 would be much better for Black.

c32) 20 Nd5 Qd8 21 Ne3 (21 Bg5 Nxd5 22 Rxh8+ Kxh8 23 Rh1+ Kg7 24 exd5 Qc7 is level according to Golubev, as 25 Bxe7?! can be met with 25...Rh8) 21...b4 22 a4 Qd7 23 Nf5 and now rather than 23...b3? 24 Bf8!, as in L.Kernazhitsky-I.Shumilov, Kiev 2006, Black could have played 23...Nd5! (with the idea of ...Nc3+) 24 exd5 Qxf5 with a good position.

c33) 20 Bg5 Bg7 21 Rc1!? is an untried positional approach. This looks a little more pleasant for White, as 21...b4 can be met with 22 Na2.

### **17...Rxc4 (Diagram 19) 18 Qc1!**

This is a key move. White threatens both 19 Nd5 and 19 Bxf6. Instead White can play for a tiny advantage with 18 Bxf6 Bxf6 19 Nd5 Qxd2 20 Rxd2 (harmless is 20 Nxf6+ Kg7! 21 Nh5+ gxf5 22 Rxd2 Rc5) and now:

a) 20...Bg5 21 f4 e6 (instead 21...Bf6 22 g4!? looks good for White, as 22...Rxe4? fails to 23 Nxf6+ exf6 24 Rdh2 and 22...Re8 23 g5 Bg7 24 Re2 leaves White with an edge) 22 fxg5 exd5 23 Rxd5 Rxe4 24 Rxd6 Rg4 25 Rd7 Rxg5 26 Rf1 f5 27 Rf2 with the idea of Re2-e7 gives White the initiative.

b) 20...Kg7 21 g4 Bg5 22 Rdh2 Rg8 23 b3 was a little bit better for White in S.Marjanovic-H.Messing, Bela Crkva 1984, but Black should certainly be able to hold this kind of ending and in fact the game was soon drawn.

### **18...e6**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Worse is 18...Rbc8 19 Nd5 (after 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Nd5 Rxc2 21 Nxf6+ exf6 22 Qh6 Black draws with 22...Rxb2+ 23 Kxb2 Qc3+) 19...Nxd5 20 Bxg7 Kxg7 21 Qh6+ Kf6 22 Rxd5 and Black will not last long.

### 19 g4 (Diagram 20)

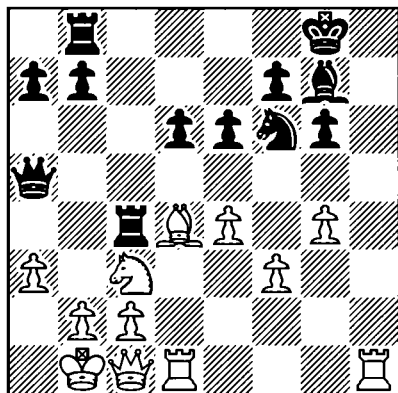


Diagram 20 (B)

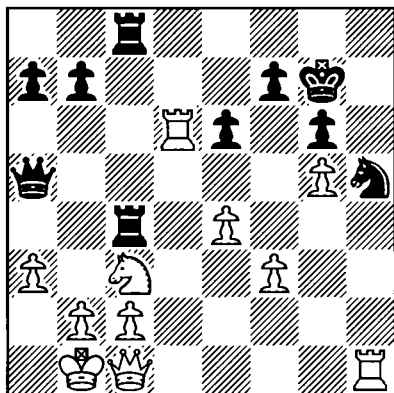


Diagram 21 (B)

### 19...Rbc8

Instead 19...b5 20 g5 (20 Na2 looks good too) 20...Nh5 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Rxh5! gxh5 23 Qf4! gives White a strong attack:

a) 23...Kg8 24 g6 f5 (24...fxg6 25 Qf6) 25 Rxd6 Rxc3 26 Qe5 Rc7 27 Qxe6+ Kg7 28 exf5 b4 29 f4 bxa3 30 Rd7+ 1-0 M.Bennedik-V.Demian, correspondence 2002.

b) 23...Qd8 24 Rxd6 Qc7 (if 24...Qe7 25 Qe5+ with the idea of Nd5 is crushing, because 25...f6 26 gxf6+ Qxf6 27 Rd7+ Kg6 28 Qxb8 wins) 25 Qf6+ Kg8 26 g6 b4 27 Nb5 Qb7 28 Rd8+ Rxd8 29 Qxd8+ Kg7 30 Nd6 Qc6 31 gxf7 1-0 T.Kosintseva-N.Pogonina, Samara 2005.

### 20 g5 Nh5 21 Bxg7 Kxg7 22 Rxd6 (Diagram 21)

White has won a pawn, but Black still has a resource.

### 22...Rxc3!

This move is obvious in itself, but it is the follow-up which justifies Black's play. Instead 22...Qe5?! 23 Qd2 b5 24 Rd7 a5 25 f4! Qc5 (White wins after either 25...Nxf4 26 Qh2 or 25...Qxf4 26 Qxf4 Nxf4 27 Nxb5) 26 f5 saw White quickly break through in M.Parligras-M.Cebalo, Nova Gorica 2004.

### 23 bxc3 Ng3 (Diagram 22)



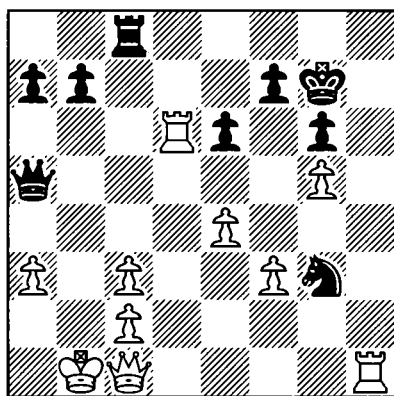


Diagram 22 (W)

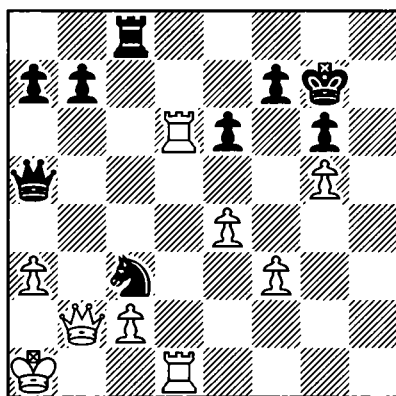


Diagram 23 (B)

Black attacks the rook and prepares ...Ne2xc3+.

#### 24 Rhd1

White walks into the fork on c3 because the Black knight will end up pinned to its own king. Instead 24 Re1! 'falls into it' because Black can play 24...Ne2 anyway. Nevertheless, White maintains some chances here:

a) 25 Qb2 Nxc3+ 26 Ka1 Qxg5 (26...Rc4!? 27 Rd3 b5 28 f4 b4 is also possible) 27 Rd3 Qf6 28 Ree3 Na4 29 Qxf6+ Kxf6 30 e5+ and now both 30...Ke7 31 Kb1 Rc4 and 30...Kg7 31 Kb1 g5 are possible. It will not be easy for White to win because Black has active pieces and the better pawn structure.

b) 25 Rxe2! Qb5+ 26 Qb2 Qxe2 27 c4+ Kg8 28 Qc3! keeps an edge. After 28...Qg2 (Black cannot play 28...Rxc4 29 Rd8+ or 28...Qxc4 29 Rd8+) 29 Rd7 Qxg5 30 Rxb7 Qc5 31 Qb3 (or 31 Kb2) 31...Qxc4 32 Qxc4 Rxc4 33 Kb2 Black had won his pawn back, but White's active king and rook translated to victory in F.Kindbeiter-P.Cullen, correspondence 2004.

#### 24...Ne2 25 Qb2 Nxc3+ 26 Ka1 (Diagram 23) 26...Qc5?!

Black should certainly take the pawn with 26...Qxg5! with decent compensation for the exchange. After 27 Rxe6!? Kg8! (27...fxe6? 28 Qxb7+) 28 Re8+ Rxe8 29 Qxc3 a draw was agreed in P.Dahl-S.Aguilar, correspondence 2002.

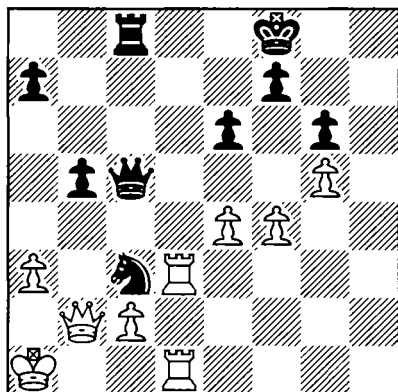
#### 27 R6d3 b5 28 f4 Kf8? (Diagram 24)

Black had to break the pin with 28...e5! when the d1-rook is attacked. After 29 Rf1 exf4 30 Qb4! (not 30 Rxf4?? Qg1+) 30...Qxb4 (worse is 30...Qe5 31 Qd4) 31 axb4 Nxe4 32 Rxf4 Nxg5 Black has counterplay in the ending.

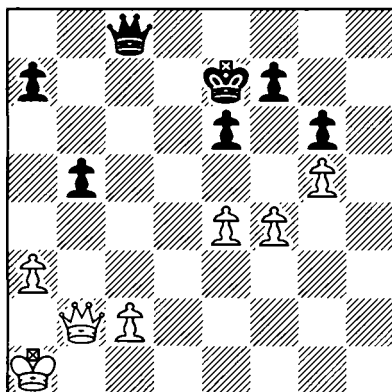
**29 Rxc3!**

White gives back the exchange to simplify to a pawn-up queen ending.

**29...Qxc3 30 Rd8+! Ke7 31 Rxc8 Qxc8 (Diagram 25) 32 Qb4+!**



**Diagram 24 (W)**



**Diagram 25 (W)**

Perhaps Black missed this clever move. Instead 32 Qxb5 Qxc2 is just equal.

**32...Ke8**

Even worse is 32...Kd8? 33 Qf8+.

**33 Qxb5+ Kf8 34 Kb2**

White is up a pawn for nothing and went on to win.

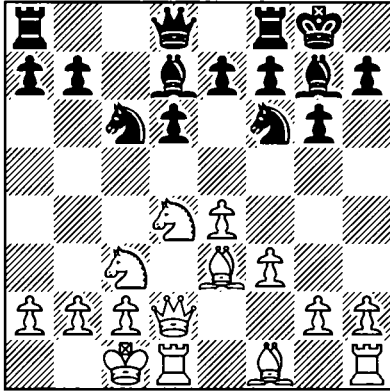
**34...a6 35 Qb4+ Kg8 36 c4 Qc7 37 e5 Qc6 38 c5 Qf3 39 Qc4 Qc6 40 Kc3 a5 41 Kd4 Kg7 42 Ke3 Kg8 43 Qc3 a4 44 Qc4 Qg2 45 c6 Qg3+ 46 Kd2 Qf2+ 47 Kc3 Qe1+ 48 Kc2 Qf2+ 49 Kb1 Qb6+ 50 Ka1 Qg1+ 51 Kb2 Qf2+ 52 Ka1 Qg1+ 53 Kb2 Qf2+ 54 Qc2 Qxf4 55 Qc3 Qf2+ 56 Kc1 Qf1+ 57 Kd2 Qf2+ 58 Kd3 Qf3+ 59 Kd4 Qf2+ 60 Kc4 Qb6 61 Kd3 Qb5+ 62 Kd2 Qd5+ 63 Ke3 Qg2 64 c7 Qg1+ 65 Kd3 Qd1+ 66 Kc4 Qd5+ 67 Kb4 Qb7+ 68 Kxa4 Qa6+ 69 Kb3 Qb5+ 70 Kc2 Qe2+ 71 Kc1 Qf1+ 72 Kd2 Qf2+ 73 Kd3 Qf1+ 74 Kd4 Qf2+ 75 Kc4 Qe2+ 76 Kb4 Qe4+ 77 Ka5 1-0**

**Game 41**  
**I.Zugic-H.Nakamura**  
**Miami 2007**

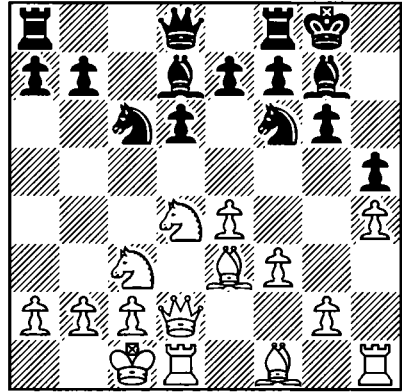
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0**

Black can also delay castling with 8...Bd7 9 0-0-0 Rc8 as often played by Tiviakov. After 10 g4 Ne5 11 h4 h5 12 g5 Nh7 White will aim for f4-f5. This line is risky but not necessarily bad and could certainly use some more testing.

**9 0-0-0 Bd7 (Diagram 26)**



**Diagram 26 (W)**



**Diagram 27 (W)**

This move has generally been considered to be inferior, but many strong players have given it a try. The main problem with it is that if Black ever plays ...Rc8 and ...Ne5-c4, White can capture the knight and will have saved two tempi (if Bf1xc4) or one tempo (if Be2xc4) compared to the 9 Bc4 lines where White plays Bf1-c4-b3xc4. However, if Black does not rush to make this manoeuvre he can hope to justify his play. Black's strategy is based on various tactical tricks and in general White's play should be faster.

**10 g4**

Instead 10 Bc4 just transposes to the main positions with 9 Bc4, while 10 Kb1 Rc8 11 g4 transposes to lines with an early Kb1. The main alternative is 10 h4 when 10...Rc8 11 g4 transposes back to the game and 11 h5!? Nxh5 12 g4 Ng3 is relatively unexplored. Here Black can also consider 10...h5!? (**Diagram 27**).

Now 11 Bc4 just brings us to the Soltis Variation. The alternatives seek to punish Black:

a) 11 Bh6 Nxe4!? (Black could also consider the solid alternatives 11...Bxh6 12 Qxh6 Nxd4 13 Rxd4 Qb6 and 11...Nxd4 12 Bxg7 Kxg7 13 Qxd4) 12 fxe4 (12 Nxe4 Bxd4 13 Bxf8 Qb6! is good for Black – Bologan) 12...Bxd4 13 Bxf8 Qxf8 gives Black good compensation for the exchange.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

b) 11 Kb1 Ne5!? (11...Rc8 12 Nxc6!? bxc6 13 Bc4! is a dangerous change of plans) 12 Bh6 Rc8 13 Bxg7 Kxg7 should be fine for Black, as he has ...Rh8 available if necessary.

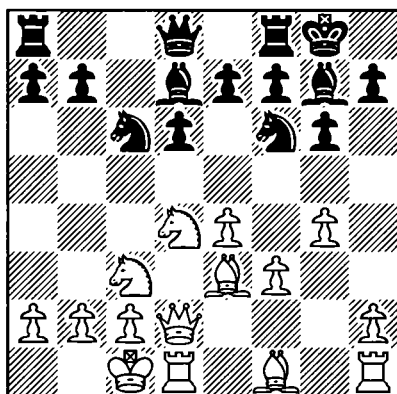
c) 11 g4 is the obvious attempt at refutation, leading to 11...hxg4 12 h5 Nxh5 13 Nf5!? Bxf5 14 exf5 and now:

c1) 14...Ng3 15 fxc6 Nxh1 16 Qh2 fxc6 17 Bc4+ Rf7 18 Rxh1 e6 (18...Ne5? 19 Qh7+ Kf8 20 Bh6 Bxh6+ 21 Qxh6+ Ke8 22 Bb5+ Nc6 23 Qxg6 was winning for White in M.Perunovic-S.Manelidis, Kavala 2004) 19 Bxe6 Qf6 20 Bxf7+ Kxf7 21 fxc4 Rh8 (21...Qf3!?) 22 Qg2 Rxh1+ 23 Qxh1 Qe6 was level in A.Pavlidis-V.Sivuk, Herceg Novi 2008.

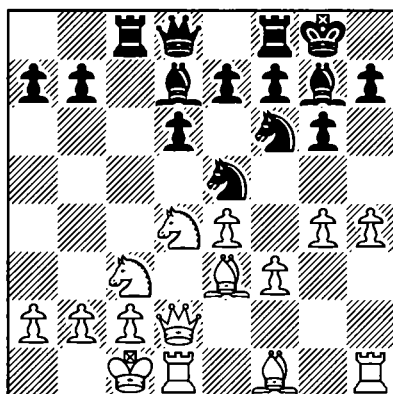
c2) 14...Qa5!? 15 fxc6 Bxc3! 16 bxc3 (after 16 gxf7+ Kxf7! 17 bxc3 Black could try 17...gxf3!?) 16...Qxa2 17 gxf7+ Kxf7! with complications which do not look unfavourable for Black.

d) 11 Be2 Rc8 (Black may prefer 11...Ne5 12 Bh6 Rc8 13 Bxg7 Kxg7) 12 Rdg1 (12 g4 hxg4 13 h5 Nxh5 14 fxc4 is met by 14...Ng3!) 12...Ne5 13 g4 Nc4 (13...hxg4 14 h5 Nxh5 15 fxc4 Nf6 16 Bh6 gives White a very strong attack) 14 Bxc4 Rxc4 15 gxh5 Nxh5 16 Nde2 looks a little better for White.

Returning to 10 g4 (**Diagram 28**):



**Diagram 28 (B)**



**Diagram 29 (W)**

### 10...Rc8

Sometimes Black tries to do without this move by playing 10...Ne5 11 h4 b5. White can ignore the pawn and attack with 12 h5 b4 13 Nd5 Nxd5 14 exd5 Qa5 15 Kb1

Qxd5 and now:

a) 16 hxg6 fxg6 17 Qh2 gave White good attacking chances in V.Bologan-A.Fedorov, Elista Olympiad 1998.

b) 16 Nf5!? Qxd2 17 Nxe7+ Kh8 18 Bxd2 Rfe8 (not (18...Nxf3? 19 hxg6) was D.Pruess-S.Shivaji, Chicago 2002. Here 19 h6! looks strong.

#### 11 h4

White can also 11 Kb1 and after 11...Ne5, 12 h4 transposes to the notes to White's 12th, below, while 12 Be2!? will be covered in next game. Instead 12 h3 is a bit strange: 12...b5!? 13 f4 (13 Ncxb5 Rb8 14 f4 Nf3 15 Nxf3 Nxe4 16 Qd5 Nf6 17 Qb3 a6 gives Black compensation – Ward) 13...b4! 14 Nd5 Nxd5 (not 14...Nxe4?! 15 Qg2, but 14...Nc4!? was possible) 15 exd5 Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 f5 Qa8!? gave Black good play in A.Stripunsky-H.Nakamura, Stillwater 2007.

#### 11...Ne5

Instead 11...h5 has been played a lot, but looks risky after 12 gxh5! (12 g5 should give White a slight edge, but 12 Nd5 hxg4 13 h5 Nxh5 looks a bit speculative) 12...Nxh5 13 Rg1! and here:

a) 13...Nxd4 14 Bxd4 Bxd4 15 Qxd4 Be6 16 Rg5 Qb6 17 Qd2 Rfd8 18 Rb5 (18 Na4) 18...Qg1 19 Rg5 Qb6 20 Na4! Qc7 21 Rxh5! was winning for White in S.Fedorchuk-J.Stocek, German League 2006. If 21...gxh5 22 Qg5+ Kf8 23 Qh6+ Kg8 (or 23...Ke8 24 Bb5+) 24 Bd3 wins quickly.

b) 13...Ne5 14 Bh6 Qa5 (White is also much better after 14...Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Nf5+! Bxf5 18 exf5 or 14...Nd3+ 15 Bxd3 Bxd4 16 Rg5! Ng7 17 h5) 15 Bxg7 Kxg7 16 Bb5! (Yakovich; instead 16 f4 Rxc3! 17 fxe5 Rc5 looks okay for Black) and if 16...Bxb5 17 Nf5+ Kg8 18 Qh6 gives White a strong attack.

Returning to 11...Ne5 (**Diagram 29**):

#### 12 h5

Instead 12 Be2 will be covered in the next game. The main alternative is 12 Kb1 (**Diagram 30**).

Black has:

a) 12...Nc4? wastes two tempi. After 13 Bxc4 Rxc4 14 h5 White has played h4 and h5 for free compared to Game 12.

b) 12...h5 (White has spent a tempo on Kb1, so maybe this is not so bad now) 13 gxh5 (of course 13 g5 is possible too) 13...Nxh5 14 Rg1 and then:

b1) 14...Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 Nde2! b5 17 Bh6 gives White good attacking chances, while 17 Bxa7!? is possible as well.

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

b2) 14...Rxc3 15 bxc3 (15 Qxc3 Nxf3 should be okay for Black) and here:

b21) 15...Qa5 16 Nb3 Qa4 17 Be2 Bb5 (Short suggests 17...Kh7 instead) 18 f4 Bxe2 (18...Nc4 19 Bxc4 Bxc4 20 f5 is also good for White) 19 Qxe2 Nc4 20 Bc1 gave White the upper hand in N.Short-Le Quang Liem, Dresden Olympiad 2008. If 20...Bxc3 21 Qxh5 Na3+ 22 Bxa3 Qxa3 23 Rxc6+ fxc6 24 Qxc6+ Bg7 25 e5 is winning for White.

b22) 15...Qb6+ 16 Nb3 Qc7 17 Be2 Kh7 18 Bd4 (if 18 f4 Nc4 19 Bxc4 Qxc4 20 f5 Qxe4!?) 18...Bh6 19 Be3 Bg7 20 Bd4 Bh6 (White is much better after 20...Rc8 21 f4 Nc4 22 Bxc4 Qxc4 23 f5, so Black acquiesces to a draw against his lower-rated opponent) 21 Be3 ½-½ was E.Pupo-S.Tiviakov, Yucatan 2004.

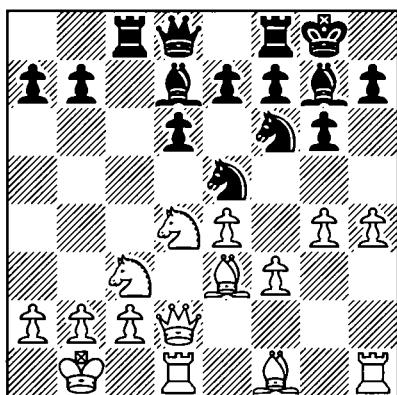


Diagram 30 (B)

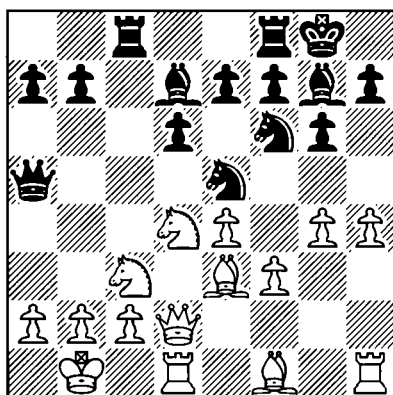


Diagram 31 (W)

c) 12...b5 was Ward's old recommendation. After 13 h5! Nxf3!? (if 13...b4 14 Nd5 White is much better after either 14...Nxd5 15 exd5 Qa5 16 hxg6 fxc6 17 Qh2 or 14...e6 15 Nxf6+ Qxf6 16 g5 with the idea of Qh2) 14 Nxf3 Bxc4 15 Be2 b4 16 Nd5 Nxe4 White has a pleasant choice:

c1) 17 Qe1 e6 18 Qh4! (better than 18 Nf4, as in C.Dorrington-S.Williams, Halifax (rapid) 2004) 18...Bxf3 19 Qxd8 Rfxd8 20 Ne7+ Kf8 21 Bxf3 Rc3! 22 bxc3 Nxc3+ 23 Kc1 Kxe7 when Black has five pawns for the rook, but White should still be better according to Jones.

c2) 17 Qxb4 e6 18 h6 (18 Qxe4!?) 18...Bh8 19 Qxe4 Bf5 20 Qb4? (20 Qxf5! exf5 21 Bg5 still looks good for White) 20...Rxc2 21 Bd3 Rxb2+ 22 Qxb2 Bxd3+ 23 Rxd3 Bxb2 24 Kxb2 exd5 and Black had good chances in this messy position in Y.Zhou-R.Pert, British League 2011.

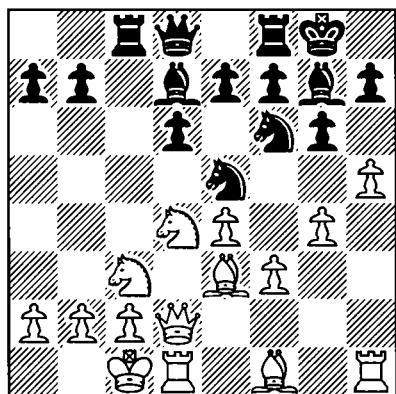
d) 12...Qa5 (Diagram 31).

Now 13 h5 would transpose back to the game, while 13 Be2 and 13 Nb3 Qc7 14 Be2 are covered in the next game. The obvious alternative is 13 Nd5, but matters are not so simple after 13...Qxd2 14 Nxe7+ Kh8 and now:

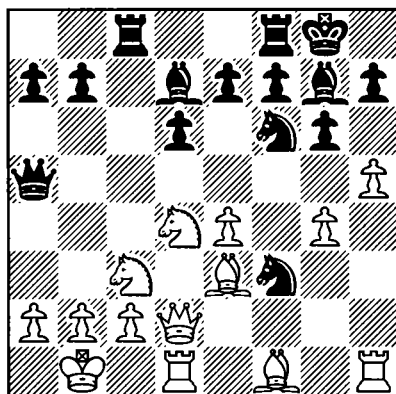
d1) 15 Rxd2?! Rce8 16 h5 (bad is 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 exd5 Nxf3 18 Nxf3 Rxe3, but 16 g5 Nxe4 17 fxe4 Rxe7 is fairly level) 16...Nexg4 17 fxg4?! (better is 17 Bf4 Rxe7 18 Bxd6 Rfe8 19 Bxe7 Rxe7 when Black is a little better because 20 fxg4? fails to 20...Nxe4) 17...Nxe4 was good for Black in T.Olafsson-M.Perunovic, Reykjavik 2009. White is up a piece, but has too many things hanging.

d2) 15 Bxd2 Rce8 16 Bb4!? (worse is 16 h5 Nexg4!, while 16 g5 Nxe4 17 fxe4 Bg4 18 Be2 Rxe7 19 Bb4 Bxe2 20 Nxe2 Nc4 21 b3 a5 22 Bc3 Ne3 23 Rxd6 Rxe4 was even in E.Kislik-I.Sipos, Szombathely 2009) 16...Nexg4 (the complications also looked favourable for White after 16...Nxf3 17 Nxf3 Nxe4 18 Nd5 Bxg4 19 Bg2 Nf2 20 Bxd6 in G.Timoshenko-Ji.Gallagher, Jacksonville 1990, although Black managed to hold things together against his much higher-rated opponent) 17 fxg4 Nxe4 18 Nd5 Bxg4 19 Be2 Bxe2 20 Nxe2 Nf2 21 Nec3 was M.Johnson-C.Alvarez Rouchaud, correspondence 1996. The ensuing ending with two knights against a rook gave White a lasting edge.

Returning to 12 h5 (**Diagram 32**):



**Diagram 32 (B)**



**Diagram 33 (W)**

### 12...Qa5

Again, 12...Nc4? 13 Bxc4 Rxc4 is bad. White can quickly achieve a large advantage with 14 hxg6 hxg6 (or 14...fxg6 15 e5!) 15 b3! with the idea of Bh6.

### 13 Kb1



**WARNING: This normal move is both natural and popular, but this is actually what Black is hoping for!**

Instead 13 Be2! and 13 Nb3 Qc7 14 Be2 can be seen in the next game, while 13 hxg6 fxg6 is possible too. Now:

a) 14 Nb3 Qc7 15 Be2 is too late after 15...b5! – see note ‘a’ to White’s 13th move in the next game.

b) 14 g5?! Nh5 15 Nb3 Qd8 16 f4 Ng4 17 Bxa7 Bxc3 18 bxc3 Nxf4 was much better for Black in S.Macak-T.Henrichs, Kallithea 2008.

c) 14 Kb1 b5 (worse is 14...Rxc3?! 15 Qxc3 Qxc3 16 bxc3 Nxf3 17 Bc4+, but Black should consider 14...Nxf3!? 15 Nxf3 Bxg4) 15 Bxb5 Bxb5 16 Ncxb5 Qxd2 17 Bxd2 Rb8 18 Nc3 Nc4 19 b3 Nxg4 20 fxg4 Bxd4 21 Nd5 Nxd2+ 22 Rxd2 Bf6 23 Nxf6+ Rxf6 24 e5! gave White a small but persistent advantage in the ending in D.Baramidze-D.Stellwagen, Maastricht 2004.

### **13...Nxf3! (Diagram 33)**

This is the correct move order. Instead 13...Rxc3 14 Qxc3 Qxc3 15 bxc3 Nxf3 16 h6! avoids both the 17...Bxf3 option below and the possibility of a pin with ...Bh6 (see variation ‘c1’ in the notes to White’s 17th move).

### **14 Nxf3 Rxc3**

Instead 14...Bxg4 15 Bg2 leads to the main line in the notes to White’s 17th move after 15...Rxc3 16 Qxc3 Qxc3 17 bxc3 Nxe4 18 Rd3, but White can try to deviate instead:

a) 15 Be2?! is the wrong square for the bishop because it will become vulnerable after 15...Rxc3 16 Qxc3 Qxc3 17 bxc3 Nxe4.

b) 15 h6 Rxc3 16 hxg7?! (16 Qxc3 Qxc3 17 bxc3 reaches the main line) 16...Rfc8 gives Black the initiative.

c) 15 Nd5!? Qxd2 16 Nxe7+ Kh8 17 Rxd2 Bxf3 18 Rh3 Bxh5 19 Nxc8 Rxc8 20 Bg2 looks a little better for White as Black’s h5-bishop is awkwardly placed.

### **15 Qxc3**

White does not have time for 15 h6? because of 15...Be6! 16 a3 Nxe4.

### **15...Qxc3 16 bxc3 Bxg4 (Diagram 34) 17 h6**

This move grants Black an additional option which Nakamura chooses to avoid. More challenging is 17 Bg2 Nxe4 18 Rd3 Nxc3+ and now White should avoid 19 Kc1 Bf5! and 19 Rxc3 Bxc3 with play similar to the game. Better is 19 Kb2! (**Diagram 35**) when it is not so easy to exploit the position of the white king, but Black



can muster up reasonable counterplay:

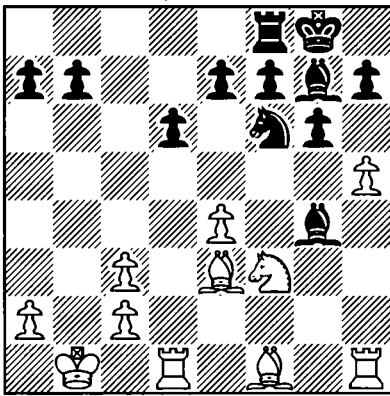


Diagram 34 (W)

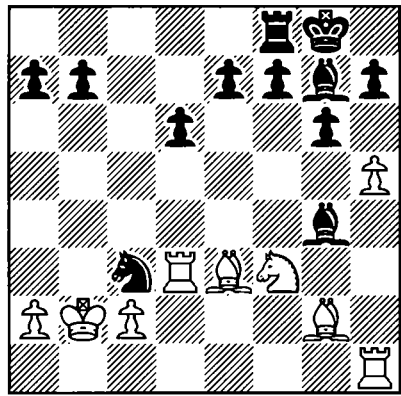


Diagram 35 (B)

a) 19...Rc8 20 h6 Bf6 21 Nd4 Ne2 22 c3 Ng3 and now instead of 23 Rc1 as in K.Müller-C.Ward, German League 1997, Ward suggests 23 Rg1 to annoy Black's pieces on the g-file.

b) 19...Ne4+ and here instead of 20 Kc1 Bxh5, 20 Nd4!? attacks the e4-knight.

c) 19...Nd1+! and now:

c1) 20 Kc1? Nxe3 21 Rxe3 Bh6! is a typical trick.

c2) 20 Kb1 gives Black the choice between repeating with 20...Nc3+ or playing on with 20...Nxe3 21 Rxe3 Bf6.

c3) 20 Kb3 Be6+ 21 Kb4 and here Black could play 21...Bc3+ 22 Rxc3 a5+ 23 Kxa5 Nxc3 or 21...Nb2!?

c4) 20 Ka3 Nb2!? (or 20...Nxe3 21 Rxe3 Rc8 with unclear play) 21 h6 (21 Rb3 Nc4+ 22 Kb4 d5 is similar) 21...Bf6 22 Rb3 Nc4+ 23 Kb4 d5! 24 Bxa7 Ra8 25 Bf2 Bd7 26 Nd4 Ra4+ 27 Kc3 e5 and Black has vigorous counterplay.

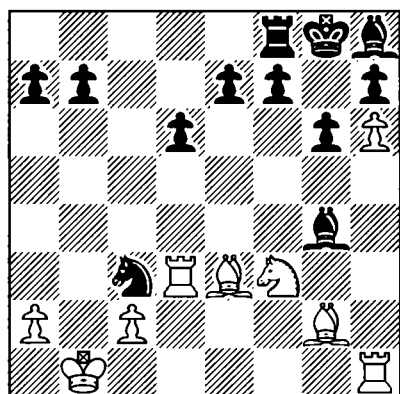
### 17...Bh8

Black has a promising alternative in 17...Bxf3!? 18 hxg7 Rc8 19 Bd3 b6 20 Rhf1 Bxd1 21 Rxd1 Kxg7 22 Kb2 h5, as in I.Armanda-D.Feletter, Zadar 2002.

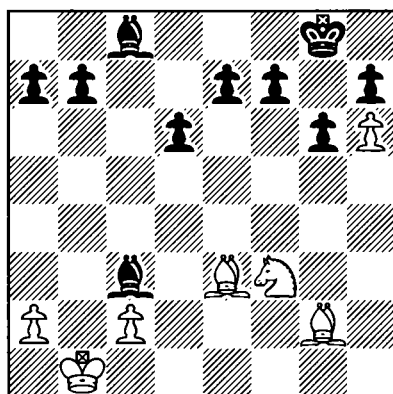
### 18 Bg2

Again, 18 Be2?! Nxe4 leaves the bishop looking too vulnerable.

### 18...Nxe4 19 Rd3 Nxc3+ (Diagram 36)



**Diagram 36 (W)**



**Diagram 37 (W)**

### **20 Rxc3?!**

Instead 20 Kc1 Bf5! causes problems, but White should play 20 Kb2! as in the note to his 17th move. Here he even has a better version because 20...Nd1+ can be met with 21 Kc1! Nxe3 22 Rxe3 (there is no ...Bh6 now) 22...Bf6. Black has lost a tempo protecting e7 and after 23 Ra3 a6 24 Bh3 White had the upper hand in A.Chow-P.Dorsey, Dallas 1996.

### **20...Bxc3**

Black has a few pawns for the piece and at least equal chances in the ending.

### **21 Rh4 Bd7 22 Rc4 Rc8**

Black is happy to exchange rooks because then his king will not feel as much discomfort from the advanced h6-pawn.

### **23 Rxc8+ Bxc8 (Diagram 37) 24 Ng5?**

White had to at least grab a pawn with 24 Bxa7.

### **24...b6**

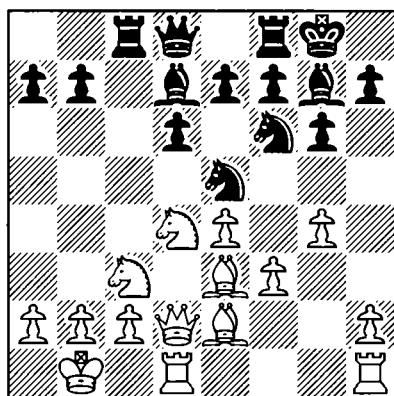
Now Black has four good pawns for the piece and wins handily.

**25 Kc1 e6 26 Bd2 Be5 27 Nf3 Bg3 28 Bg5 Bb7 29 Kd1 Bd5 30 a3 f5 31 Ne1 Bxg2 32 Nxg2 d5 33 a4 Kf7 34 Ke2 Bd6 35 Ne1 e5 36 Nf3 e4 37 Nd4 f4 38 c3 Be5 39 Kf2 Bxd4+ 40 cxd4 f3 41 Bd2 a6 42 Kg3 Ke6 43 Be1 b5 44 axb5 axb5 45 Bd2 Kf5 46 Be1 Kg5 47 Bd2+ Kh5 0-1**

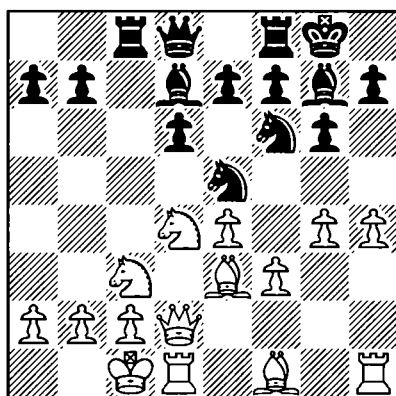
**Game 42**  
**J.Smeets-M.Carlsen**  
**Wijk aan Zee 2004**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 Nc6 8 Qd2 0-0 9 0-0-0 Bd7 10 g4 Rc8 11 h4**

Another way that White can go for a quick Be2 is with 11 Kb1 Ne5 12 Be2!? (Diagram 38).



**Diagram 38 (B)**



**Diagram 39 (W)**

Now 12...Qa5?! runs into 13 Nd5 and 12...Nc4?! 13 Bxc4 Rxc4 leaves Black a tempo down on the dangerous 12 Kb1 line of Game 12, because White has taken on c4 in two moves (Be2xc4) instead of three (Bc4-b3xc4). After 14 h4 White must be much better. In practice Black has often played 12...b5, but White can even just can take the pawn:

a) 13 Ncxb5 Rb8 (both 13...Bxb5 14 Bxb5 and 13...a6 14 Nc3 Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 Nde2 look insufficient as well) 14 c4!? a6 15 Nc3 Qc8 16 Rc1 leaves Black with little to show for the pawn and after 16...Rb4? 17 g5 White won easily in J.Gdanski-A.Deszczynski, Warsaw (rapid) 2008.

b) 13 Ndxb5 Bxb5 (after 13...Nc4 14 Bxc4 Rxc4 Golubev suggests 15 e5, while 15 b3 Rb4 was played in C.Kongsted-R.Pert, Copenhagen 2002, and here 16 Nd4 looks good) 14 Nxb5 Rb8 15 c4 (15 Bxa7!) 15...a6 16 Nd4 Qc7 17 Rc1 was O.Korneev-A.Fedorov, Krasnodar 1998. Now 17...Nfd7 would give Black compensation for the

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

pawn according to Fedorov.

c) 13 h4 ignores Black's offer, but this is also dangerous. After 13...Nc4 (instead 13...b4 14 Nd5 Nxd5 15 exd5 Qa5 16 h5 is note 'b' to Black's 14th move, below, while 15...Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 h5 leaves White way ahead) 14 Bxc4 bxc4 15 h5 Rb8 Black plays along the lines of the Chinese Dragon of Chapter 4, but here he is down two tempi because White has played Be2xc4 and Black ...Rc8-b8. White could play 16 Ka1, 16 Bh6, or even try 16 Nf5!? with the idea 16...gxf5 17 h6.

### 11...Ne5 (Diagram 39) 12 h5

White has two major alternatives:

#### a) 12 Be2 (Diagram 40).

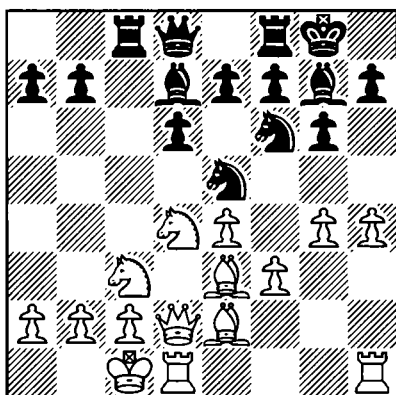


Diagram 40 (B)

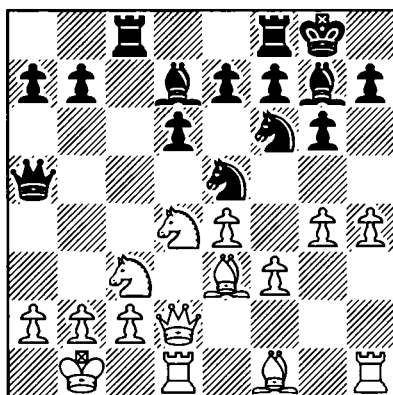


Diagram 41 (W)

Here White does not even bother with Kb1. Now 12...Nc4 13 Bxc4 Rxc4 is bad as always after 14 Kb1 or 14 h5, while 12...Qa5 13 Kb1 is variation 'b2' below. Black has a couple of alternatives, but neither is very appealing:

a1) 12...b5 13 h5 Nc4?! (13...Qa5 is the main game, while 13...b4 14 Nd5 Nxd5 15 exd5 Qa5 16 Kb1 is variation 'b' to Black's 14th move) 14 Bxc4 bxc4 is another inferior Chinese Variation. Now instead of 15 hxg6?! fxg6! as seen in D.Mason-C.Ward, Great Yarmouth 2007, 15 Nf5! (15 Bh6 or 15 Kb1 with the idea of Ka1 and Rb1 would be typical, but this is even stronger) 15...gxf5 (15...Bxf5 16 exf5 will take apart Black's kingside) 16 h6 Bh8 (Black should prefer 16...Nxe4 17 fxe4 Bxc3 18 Qxc3 f6, but it is still ugly) 17 Bb6! is given by Ward.

a2) After 12...h5 (in general I am sceptical of this advance, but here it may well be

the best try) 13 gxh5 (13 Rdg1 is also dangerous) 13...Nxb5 White has many tempting possibilities, such as 14 Rhg1, 14 Rdg1, 14 Bh6, or 14 f4.

b) 12 Kb1 Qa5 (12...Nc4?, 12...h5, and 12...b5 were covered in the notes to the previous game) and now 13 h5 was covered in the last game, but White has two ways to implement Be2 ideas (**Diagram 41**):

b1) 13 Nb3 Qc7 14 Be2 b5 15 g5 (also possible is 15 h5! b4 transposing to note 'b1' to White's 13th move, below) and now:

b11) 15...b4? 16 Nb5! Bxb5 17 gxf6 Bxf6 (after 17...Bxe2 18 fxg7 it is important the f-file is closed – we will see a similar position again) 18 Bxb5 Nxf3 19 Qe2 Ne5 20 Ba6 Rb8 21 h5 and White was winning in R.Lau-S.Tiviakov, Montecatini Terme 1994.

b12) 15...Nh5 16 Nd5 Qd8 17 Bxa7 Nc4 18 Bxc4 bxc4 19 Bb6 cxb3!? (this idea of Jones keeps Black in the game) 20 Bxd8 bxc2+ 21 Ka1 (also leading to an unclear position is 21 Qxc2 Rxc2 22 Nxe7+ Kh8 23 Kxc2 Rxd8) 21...cxd1Q+ 22 Rxd1 Rcx d8 23 Nxe7+ Kh8 24 Qxd6 Rb8 25 Rd2 Be6 and Black's bishops give him good counter-chances.

b2) 13 Be2 and here:

b21) 13...Nc4?! 14 Bxc4 Rxc4 15 Nb3 leaves Black a tempo down on the early ...Qa5 system.

b22) 13...b5 14 Nd5! Qxd2 15 Nxe7+ Kh8 16 Bxd2 Rce8 17 h5! gives White a winning position.

b23) 13...Rxc3 (as in the main game, this looks rather desperate, but it is hard to find a reasonable alternative) 14 Qxc3 Qxc3 15 bxc3 Rc8 and now White should probably avoid 16 Nb3 Nexg4! (worse is 16...Rxc3 17 Bd4 Rc7 18 Bxa7) 17 Bxa7 (17 fxg4?! Nxe4 is not clear at all) 17...Ne5 18 Bd4 Nh5 with some compensation in D.Lintchevski-V.Zolotukhin, Budva 2009. However, 16 Kb2 with a similar type of position to the main game has to be better for White.

**12...Qa5 (Diagram 42) 13 Be2**



**TIP: A good way to play against the 9...Bd7 line is to play an early Be2. This move guards against Black's sacrificial tricks and ...Nc4 would still leave Black one tempo behind on the 9 Bc4 lines because White has only moved his bishop once before being compelled to capture on c4.**

Instead 13 Kb1 Nxf3! was the previous game. White has a good alternative, however, in 13 Nb3 Qc7 14 Be2 b5 (**Diagram 43**) and then:

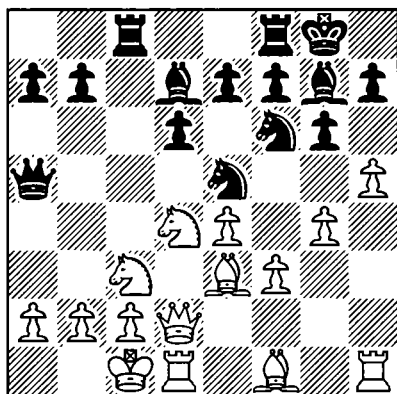


Diagram 42 (W)

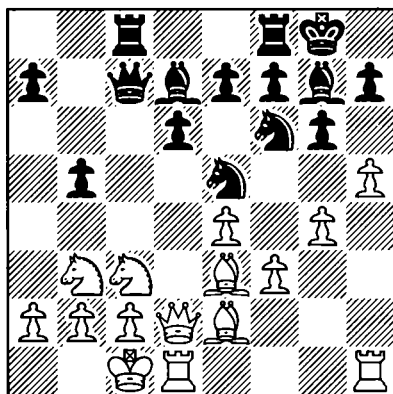


Diagram 43 (W)

a) 15 hxg6?! fxg6 helps Black tremendously because the open f-file will come into play after 16 Kb1 b4 17 Nd5 Nxd5 when f3 is falling or 16 g5 b4! when 17 Nb5 now fails to 17...Bxb5 18 gxf6 Bxe2 19 fxg7 Rxf3! 20 Qxe2 Rxe3! 21 Qh2 Rh3!.

b) 15 Kb1 and then:

b1) 15...b4 16 Nd5 Nxd5 17 exd5 a5 18 Bh6?! (better is 18 Nd4! Nc4 19 Bxc4 Qxc4 20 hxg6 fxg6 21 Qh2 when Black has problems) 18...Bxh6 19 Qxh6 Qxc2+ 20 Ka1 Qxe2! 21 hxg6 Qxd1+ 22 Rxd1 fxg6 gave Black good play in N.Short-Bu Xiangzhi, Taiyuan 2004.

b2) 15...Nc4 16 Bxc4 bxc4 17 Nd4 Rb8 is once again like a Chinese Dragon. After 18 Ka1 Qb7 19 Rb1 White should be a little better, but Black still has some chances: for example, 19...Rfc8 20 Nde2 (20 Bh6 or 20 a3 are likely improvements) 20...Rc6 21 Nf4?! Ra6! 22 Qc1 (after 22 a3 Bxg4! is still good, because of 23 fxg4 Nxe4 24 Nxe4 Rxa3 mate) 22...Bxg4! 23 fxg4 Nxe4 24 Nfe2 (or 24 Nxe4 Rxa2+ 25 Kxa2 Qa6 mate) 24...Qb4 25 hxg6? fxg6 26 Rf1 Qa5 27 a3 Nxc3 0-1 S.Vaibhav-S.Williams, London 2011.

### 13...b5

As always 13...Nc4 14 Bxc4 Rxc4 15 Nb3 is bad, while 13...Rxc3 14 Qxc3 Qxa2 could be met with 15 Qb3!? when Black's compensation is insufficient.

### 14 Kb1 (Diagram 44)

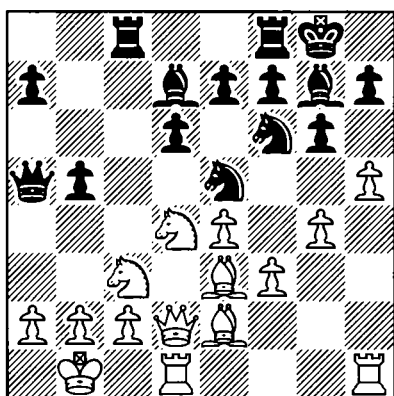
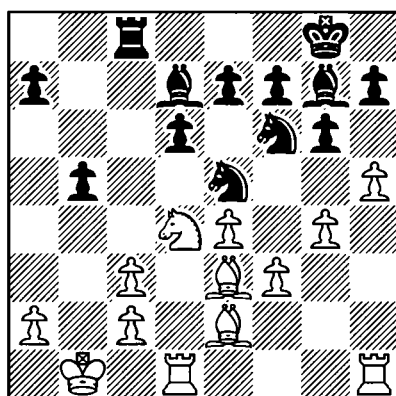
Instead 14 Nb3 Qc7 is 13 Nb3 above, but with the text White has avoided the tricks from the previous game and Black has trouble finding an effective way to continue.

**14...Rxc3**

This can hardly be completely sound, but it is not easy to offer advice. Alternatives:

a) 14...Nc4 15 Bxc4 bxc4 16 Nd5 Qd8 17 Bh6 gives White a winning attack.

b) 14...b4 is the most obvious move, but the structure that arises after 15 Nd5 Nxd5 16 exd5 is not easy for Black: 16...Qxd5? fails to 17 Nf5! and White is ready to just hammer away at the kingside. One example went 16...Rfe8 17 hxg6 hxg6 18 Bh6 Bf6 (if 18...Bh8 19 Qf4 with the idea of Qh2) 19 Qf4 Qc5 (19...Qxd5 20 Qh2) 20 Bg5! Bg7 21 Qh2 and White's attack was too strong in H.Williamson-B.Thompson, correspondence 2008.

**15 Qxc3 Qxc3 16 bxc3 Rc8 (Diagram 45)****Diagram 44 (B)****Diagram 45 (W)**

Black's compensation is based on his better structure and good piece play, but it is difficult to believe that it is enough for a whole exchange.

**17 hxg6?!** 

There was no need to rush with this move. White should prefer to retain the possibility of h5-h6. Instead 17 Kb2 a5 18 Rb1 with the idea of fighting for the initiative by creating pressure along the b-file was better.

**17...fxg6**

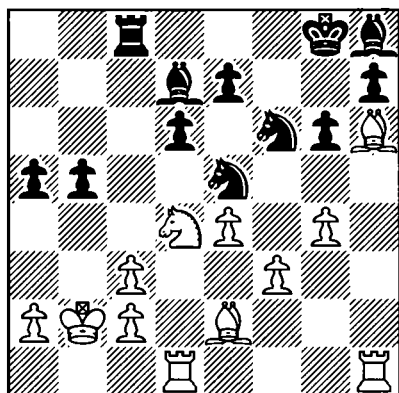
White is not going to cause much trouble along the h-file and this is more dynamic than 17...hxg6.

**18 Kb2 a5 19 Bh6**

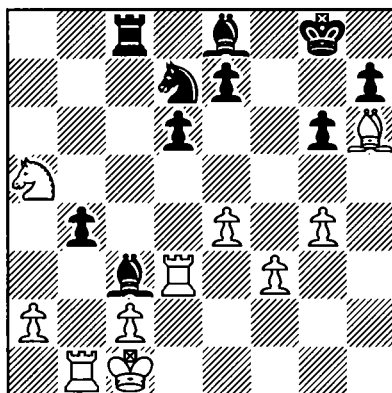
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

White must avoid both 19 Bxb5? Bxb5 20 Nxb5 Nc4+ and 19 Nxb5? Bxb5 20 Bxb5 Rb8 21 a4 Nc4+.

**19...Bh8 (Diagram 46)**



**Diagram 46 (W)**



**Diagram 47 (W)**

Here we see one point of Black's 17th move – his king has a little room to breathe.

**20 Rhf1**

Black has good play after 20 Bxb5? Bxb5 21 Nxb5 Nxf3. White needs to get his rooks into play, so 20 Rb1! hoping to use the b-file was better. If 20...Nc4+ 21 Kc1.

**20...Nc4+ 21 Bxc4+**

This gives Black the bishop pair, but after 21 Kc1 White's rooks cannot utilize the b-file.

**21...Rxc4 22 Rd3**

it is too late for 22 Rb1 because 22...b4 gives Black real counterplay.

**22...Be8!**

Not 22...b4? 23 Kb3, but now Black intends to reposition his knight with ...Nd7 when it can go to e5, c5, or b6.

**23 Rb1**

White could consider 23 Ne2!? with the idea of 23...b4?! 24 e5! opening lines for his rooks.

**23...b4 24 Kc1**

Here 24 Kb3? is not good because of 24...Bf7, while 24 cxb4 Nd7 25 Rbd1 axb4



would give Black good play.

**24...Nd7 25 Nb3?!**

White should at least have tried 25 Ne2 when Black could not take on c3 without opening the b-file.

**25...Bxc3 26 Nxa5 Rc8 (Diagram 47)**

Black has good play. The immediate threat is 27...Ne5 28 Re3 Ra8.

**27 Bd2**

White prepares to give back the exchange. Instead both 27 Bf4 Nc5 and 27 f4 Nc5 28 Re3 Ra8 look okay for Black.

**27...Ne5 28 Bxc3**

After 28 Rd5 Bxd2+ 29 Kxd2 Nxf3+ Black has ample compensation for the exchange because all of White's pawns are weak.

**28...Nxd3+ 29 cxd3 Rxc3+**

This steers the game towards a draw. Also possible was 29...bxc3!?

**30 Kd2 Ra3 31 Nc4 Rxa2+ 32 Ke3 Bb5 ½-½**

Instead 32...Ra4 33 Nb6 would win back the pawn as well.

## Conclusion

The old line with 9...Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Be6 still appears in practice, but Black has not been able to come up with much to save its theoretical viability. After 11 Kb1! Qc7 12 h4 Rfc8 Black looks okay after 13 g4 Qa5 14 Qg5 because the pawn sacrifice 14...b5! is holding up well. However, the straightforward 13 h5! pushes Black's position to the brink of defeat.

The risky line with 9...Bd7 may give Black reasonable practical chances, but if White avoids certain tactical tricks he can look forward to an edge. In almost any position a quick Bf1-e2! is a promising way for White to play.

# Chapter Ten

## 9 g4

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 g4 (Diagram 1)

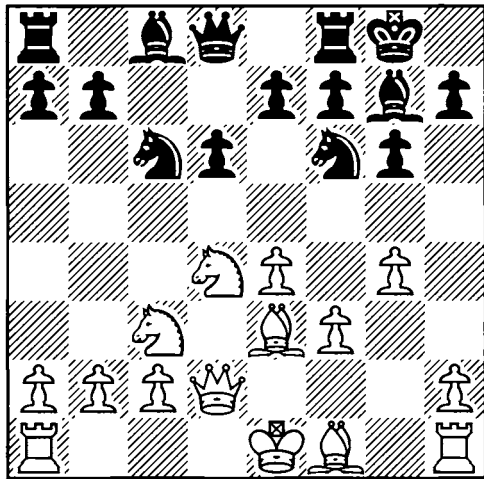


Diagram 1 (B)

With this move White avoids the long theoretical lines of 9 Bc4 and looks to reach similar positions to those arising after 9 0-0-0. In this case, however, White avoids

9...d5. After 9...Be6 10 0-0-0 Nxd4 11 Bxd4, however, Black is able to play 11...Qa5 in one go. Compared to Games 39 and 40 White has played g4 instead of Kb1, so Black does not need to lose a tempo with ...Qc7. If White plays 12 Kb1 he will be down a whole tempo, so he generally prefers 12 a3. Black then has a choice between the traditional 12...Rfc8 of Game 43 and the refinement 12...Rab8 of Game 44. In both cases the tempo that Black has saved makes a tremendous difference and if White plays sharply Black can hold his own in the complications. Therefore White often heads for an endgame with a quick Nd5, but Black should experience few problems there as well. 9 g4 has regained some popularity in recent years, however, because White has found ways to create some fresh problems with 10 Nxe6, which is covered in Game 45.

### *Game 43* **B. Warszawski-R. Graca** **Warsaw 2009**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 g4 Be6**

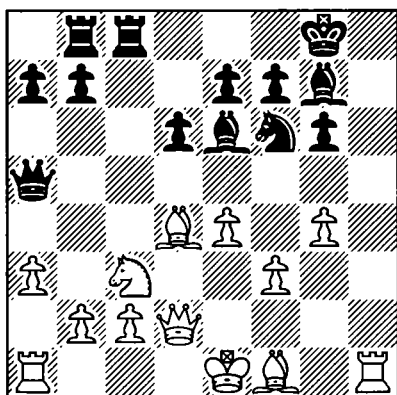
This is the main continuation. Black does not fear the exchange on e6 because his centre will be strengthened and with the half-open f-file he may create pressure against the weakened f3-pawn. It turns out that matters are not so simple here, however, and we examine this exchange in Game 45.

Black does have some other options. One approach would be just to play 9...Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 transposing to the 9...Bd7 games from the last chapter. The sacrifice 9...Bxg4?! 10 fxg4 Nxg4 is considered to be unsound because of 11 Nb3 and forcing the ...d5 break with 9...e6 10 0-0-0 d5 is also looking suspicious after 11 g5 Nh5 12 f4 (instead 12 Rg1 Nxd4 13 Bxd4 e5! 14 Bc5 d4 15 Bxf8 Bxf8 gives Black some compensation for the exchange) when both 12...Nxd4 13 Bxd4 Bxd4 14 Qxd4 Nxf4 15 Qe5 and 12...e5 13 fxe5 dxe4 14 Nxc6 Qxd2+ 15 Rxd2 bxc6 16 Bg2 are clearly to White's advantage.

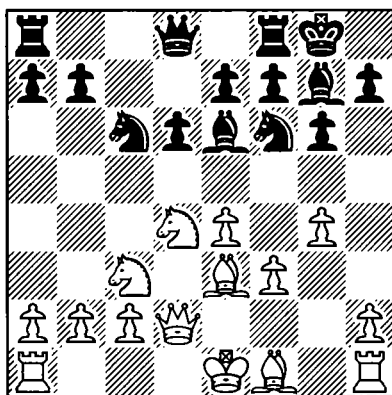
The real question is whether Black can avoid the exchange on e6 by playing 9...Nxd4 10 Bxd4 Be6. This method of playing has been considered doubtful because White does not have to castle yet and he can instead play 11 h4! Qa5 12 h5 Rfc8 13 hxg6 hxg6 (I am a bit suspicious of 13...fxg6 14 a3 Rab8) 14 a3! Rab8 (**Diagram 2**).

Now 15 0-0-0 b5 transposes to note 'b' to Black's 15th move in our main game. White may be able to do better than this, but matters are not completely clear, as

there are few practical examples:



**Diagram 2 (W)**



**Diagram 3 (W)**

a) 15 Rh4 Bc4 16 g5 Nh5 17 Bh3? Bxd4 18 Qxd4 Qxg5 was good for Black in V.Rajlich-V.Moret, Groningen 1997.

b) 15 Rh2 a6 (15...Bc4 is also possible) 16 O-O-O b5 17 Nd5 (this is harmless; 17 Qg5 and 17 g5 are alternatives) 17...Qxd2+ 18 Rxd2 Bxd5 19 Bxf6?! (19 exd5 would be equal) 19...Bxf6 20 Rxd5 Be5 21 Rh1 Kg7 gave Black the initiative in the ending in J.Egoroff-G.Vescovi, Pouso Alegre 1997.

d) 15 Bd3 Bc4 16 Qh2 and here 16...e5?! 17 Be3 Be6 18 Bh6 Bh8 19 O-O-O gave White the upper hand in J.Nunn-C.Ward, London 1984. Instead 16...b5!? could be investigated.

e) 15 Qh2!? is very flexible and could be best. Then both 15...Bc4 16 O-O-O and 15...b5 16 b4! look good for White.

Returning to 9...Be6 (**Diagram 3**):

#### **10 O-O-O**

The main alternative 10 Nxe6 is Game 45. Instead 10 h4 looks premature here because of 10...d5! and then:

a) 11 exd5 Nxd5! 12 Nxe6 fxe6 opens lines for all of Black's pieces and gives him the initiative.

b) 11 Nxe6 fxe6 12 O-O-O d4! 13 Bxd4 Nxd4 14 Qxd4 Qxd4 15 Rxd4 Nxg4 is good for Black.

c) 11 Nxc6 bxc6 just strengthens the black centre and after 12 g5? Nxe4! 13 fxe4

d4 White's position fell apart in A.Duca-V.Jianu, Eforie Nord 2009.

d) 11 h5 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 dxe4 13 h6 Bh8 14 g5 e3! 15 Bxe3 Nd5 gave Black the initiative in J.Van der Wiel-A.Miles, Utrecht 1986.

e) 11 0-0-0 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 dxe4 13 g5 Nh5 14 Bxg7 Qxd2+ 15 Rxd2 Kxg7 (or 15...e3!?) is level.

f) 11 g5 Nh5 12 Nxe6 fxe6 13 exd5 and now rather than 13...Nb4?! 14 Bh3! which gave White the advantage in Z.Efimenko-M.Pavlovic, Kragujevac 2009, Jones gives 13...exd5! with the following possibilities:

f1) 14 Nxd5 Ng3 15 Rg1 Nxf1 16 Rxf1 Bxb2 17 Rb1 Bd4 when Black is better.

f2) 14 Qxd5+ e6!? 15 Qxd8 (Black also has the initiative after 15 Qxe6+ Kh8 or 15 Qb3 Ng3 16 Rh3 Nf5) 15...Raxd8 16 Rh3 Nb4 with excellent compensation for the pawn.

### 10...Nxd4

Instead 10...Rc8 is also possible, but this move order gives White additional options. Here 11 Nxe6 fxe6 12 Bc4 Qd7 13 Bb3 Na5 would transpose to note 'c' to Black's 11th move in Game 45, and White could also play 11 Kb1 to deter ...Qa5, or simply 11 h4.

Black's main alternative has been 10...Ne5. Then 11 Nxe6 fxe6 transposes to Game 45, but I think White can do better with 11 Kb1 Rc8 12 h4, 11 h4 Qa5 12 a3 Rfc8 13 h5, or even 11 g5!? Nh5 12 f4 Nc4 13 Bxc4 Bxc4 14 f5.

### 11 Bxd4 Qa5 (Diagram 4)

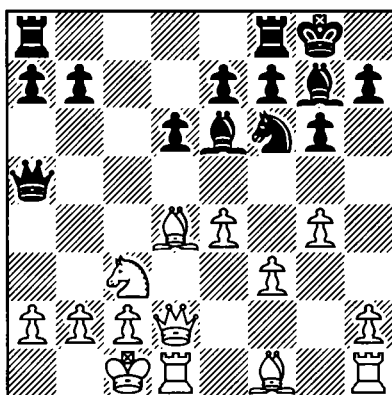


Diagram 4 (W)

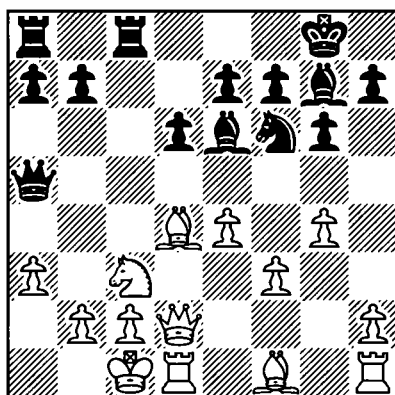


Diagram 5 (W)

## **12 a3**

This move is generally necessary in any case, but White has often played 12 Kb1 as well. This seems illogical, as White is a tempo down on Games 39 and 40, but he has managed to avoid 9 0-0-0 d5. White can get away with this tempo loss, but only if he is willing to acquiesce to an ending. After 12...Rfc8 he has:

a) 13 h4?! fails to 13...Rxc3 14 Qxc3 Qxa2+ 15 Kc1 Bxg4! 16 fxg4 Qa1+ 17 Kd2 Nxe4+ 18 Ke1 Nxc3 19 Rxa1 Bxd4 when only Black can be better.

b) 13 Nd5 is a typical bail-out. After 13...Qxd2 White must play 14 Nxf6+ Bxf6 15 Rxd2 Bxd4 16 Rxd4 Rc5 with equality because after 14 Rxd2? Nxd5 both 15 exd5 Bxd5! and 15 Bxg7 Nb4! are good for Black.

c) 13 g5 Nh5 14 Bxg7 Nxg7 15 Nd5 Qxd2 16 Rxd2 and now Black can take on d5 immediately or just play 16...Kf8.

d) 13 a3 is probably best. Now 13...Rab8 transposes to the next game, while Black could also try 13...Bc4.

## **12...Rfc8 (Diagram 5)**

This is the traditional approach. Many have considered 12...Rab8, which is examined in the next game, to be more accurate, but I believe the test move is perfectly viable and because it does not 'force' White to bail out into an endgame, it is more likely to generate complicated play.

## **13 h4 Rab8 14 h5**

White can still head for an ending with 14 Nd5 Qxd2+ 15 Rxd2. Then 15...Nxd5 16 Bxg7 (instead 16 exd5 Bxd5!? 17 Bxg7 Bxf3 18 Rh3 Bxg4 19 Rg3 Kxg7 20 Rxg4 f5 is a typical idea in this line) 16...Kxg7 17 exd5 Bd7 18 Rd4 gives White a relatively good version of a placid ending. More interesting is the unbalancing 15...Bxd5 16 exd5 when 16...b5! gives Black good counterplay. The point is that 17 Bxa7 Ra8 18 Bd4 b4 regains the pawn with good play.

## **14...b5 (Diagram 6) 15 hxg6**

Opening the h-file is the most natural, but we have also seen that pushing the pawn can have its points. Here 15 h6 does not look so threatening, however:

a) 15...Bh8 16 Nd5 Qxd2+ 17 Rxd2 is what White is hoping for. The h6-pawn is a nuisance for Black in the ending.

b) 15...Bf8!? looks very odd, but Black appears to have good counterplay after 16 g5 b4 or 16 Bxf6 b4! 17 Nd5 Qa4!.

c) 15...b4 is the accepted response and it still seems sufficient after 16 hxg6 (16 Nb5 can be met by 16...Rxb5 or 16...Bb3) 16...bxa3! 17 Nb5 (if 17 Nd5 axb2+ 18

Bxb2 Rxb2, while 17 Qh6 axb2+ 18 Kd2 Bxg4! is well known from J.Plaskett-W.Watson, Brighton 1983) 17...Rxb5 18 Bxb5 Qxb5 19 bxa3 Qa4 with good play.

### 15...fxg6!?

In general I am rather sceptical regarding the value of recapturing in this way, but here it looks viable if Black is precise. The alternatives:

a) 15...b4?! seems too good to be true and it probably is: 16 gxh7+ (White can also play 16 Nd5 Bxd5 and now 17 g5?! gives Black unnecessary chances after 17...Nxe4 or maybe even 17...hxg6!?, but 17 gxh7+! would transpose to variation 'a') 16...Kh8 (Diagram 7).

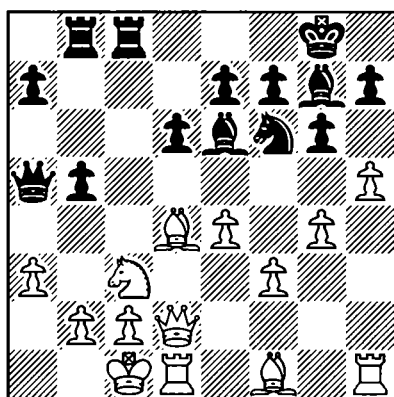


Diagram 6 (W)

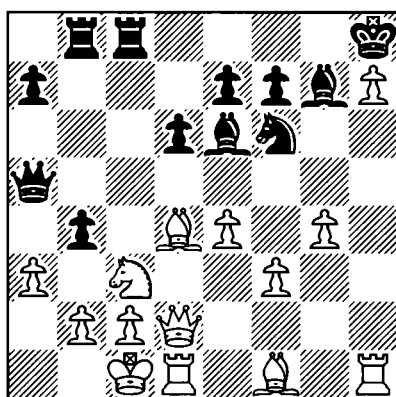


Diagram 7 (W)

White has snatched a couple of pawns, but now he must turn to defence:

a1) 17 Nd5 Bxd5 18 exd5 (18 g5 Qa4! gives Black serious counter-chances) 18...Qxd5 and now the cooperative 19 g5?! gives Black counterplay with 19...Qa2, but White can play 19 axb4!? Qa2 20 c4!? when he has good chances to consolidate. Black can instead play the untried 17...Qa4! with serious counterplay.

a2) 17 Nb1! is humble but convincing. White defends the a3-pawn and Black has trouble coming up with anything: for example, 17...Qa4 (or 17...Bb3 18 Bd3) 18 e5! Nxd4 (18...dxe5 19 Bxe5) 19 exd6! Ne5 20 dxe7 Bf5 21 b3! Qe8 (if 21...Qxb3 22 e8Q+) 22 Bc4 Qxe7 23 axb4 Rxb4 24 Qe3 1-0 was F.Balabaev-A.Popovic, correspondence 2000.

b) 15...hxg6!? is holding up. White has:

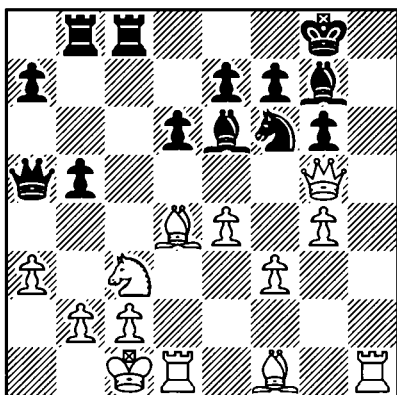
b1) 16 g5 gives Black a choice:

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

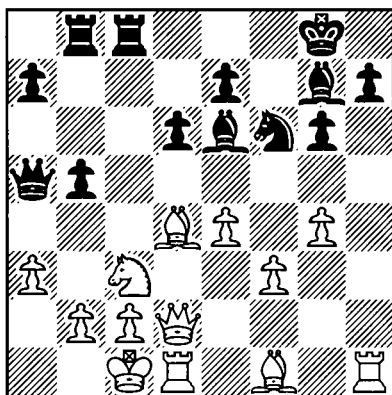
b11) 16...Nh5 17 Bxg7 Nxg7 (17...Kxg7 is safer) 18 f4? (18 Bh3!) 18...b4 19 Nb1 Rxc2+! 20 Qxc2 Rc8 21 Qxc8+ Bxc8 22 axb4 Qxb4 was winning for Black in N.Mitkov-M.Khachiyani, Santa Monica 2005.

b12) 16...b4!? 17 gxf6 (17 Nd5? Nxd5 18 Qh2 f6 19 exd5 Bf5 20 Bd3 bxa3 21 bxa3 Qxa3+ 22 Kd2 Bxd3 23 cxd3 Rc2+ 24 Kxc2 Qa2+ 25 Kc1 Rb1 mate was S.Titgemeyer-M.Perestjuk, Oberhof 2011) 17...bxc3 18 Bxc3 Rxc3 19 fxg7 (after 19 Qxc3 both 19...Qxc3 20 bxc3 Bxf6 and 19...Qg5+ 20 Qd2 Qxf6 21 c3 Qxf3 give Black sufficient compensation for the exchange) 19...Rxb2! 20 Rh8+! Kxg7 21 Qh6+ Kf6 22 Qh4+ Kg7 23 Qh6+ ½-½ Y.Fleites Marti-N.Carvajal, Santa Clara 2009.

b2) 16 Qg5 (**Diagram 8**) is the move that left Black struggling so badly in the related position in Game 40.



**Diagram 8 (B)**



**Diagram 9 (W)**

In this position, however, White's king is still on c1 and he has played g4 instead of Bd3. These differences, especially the latter, greatly improve Black's chances:

b21) 16...Bxg4? does not work after 17 Nd5! (but not 17 fxg4?! e5 18 Be3 b4 when Black has a winning attack).

b22) 16...Qc7? 17 e5 dxe5 (also failing is 17...Ne4 18 fxe4 dxe5 19 Be3 b4 20 axb4 Rxb4 21 Qh4) 18 Bxe5 and here 18...Qc5 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 loses to 20 Rd8+!, while 18...Qb6 19 Bxb8 Rxb8 looks insufficient.

b23) 16...Bc4? 17 Bxc4 Rxc4 18 Nd5 is winning for White: for example, 18...Qd8 (White also wins after 18...Qa4 19 Nxe7+ Kf8 20 c3 Kxe7 21 e5 or 18...Rxd4 19 Nxe7+ Kf8 20 Rxd4 Kxe7 21 e5) 19 Bxf6 exf6 20 Qh4 Rbc8 21 Rd2 Kf8 22 Rdh2 g5 23 Qh7 b4 24 axb4 Qd7 25 Ne3 Qa4 26 Qxg7+ 1-0 E.Safarli-V.Durarbeyli, Gaziantep 2008.



b24) 16...Nh7!? is untried but looks playable: 17 Qh4 (17 Rxh7? Kxh7 does not work here because White cannot play Rh1+) 17...Nf6 looks okay because 18 Qg5 Nh7 repeats and 18 Bd3 b4 would give Black a strong counterattack.

b25) 16...d5! has proven to be viable here: 17 e5 (Black has good chances after 17 exd5 b4 or 17 Nxd5 Bxd5 18 exd5 b4) 17...Nd7 intends ...b4 and 18 Na2 Qc7! hits both c2 and e5.

Now we return to 15...fxg6!? (**Diagram 9**):

### 16 Qg5!

Instead 16 Qh2?! b4 would give Black a strong attack, but there are a couple of sensible alternatives:

a) 16 Nd5 is safe: 16...Qxd2+ 17 Rxd2 Nxd5 18 exd5 and now 18...Bxd4 19 Rxd4 Bf7 was M.Khachiyan-R.Raud, Bela Crkva 1990. Here 20 g5! would give White the initiative after 20...Rc5 21 Rdh4 or 20...Kg7 21 Rdh4 Rh8 22 c4. Instead Black should prefer the immediate 18...Bf7! as 19 Bxa7 Ra8 20 Bd4 b4 would give him counterplay.

b) 16 g5 b4! (16...Nh5 17 Bxg7 Nxg7 18 Bh3! looks good for White) and now:

b1) 17 gxf6 bxc3 18 Bxc3 Rxc3 19 Qxc3 Qxc3 20 bxc3 Bxf6 gives Black decent compensation for the exchange.

b2) 17 Nb5 Nh5 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 (also possible is 18...Rxb5!? 19 Bxb5 Qxb5 20 Bd4 when both 20...bxa3 and 20...Qa4 are possible) 19 Qd4+ Kg8 20 axb4 Qa4 21 Nc3 Qxb4 22 Qxb4 Rxb4 with a level ending in R.Mayer-B.Jaderholm, correspondence 2006.

### 16...Bf7

This is a standard idea when Black has played ...fxg6. The g6-pawn is overprotected (although in this case White is not ready to play e4-e5 and Bxg6) and Black threatens to break the pin along the fifth rank with ...e5 followed by ...b4, so White must react.

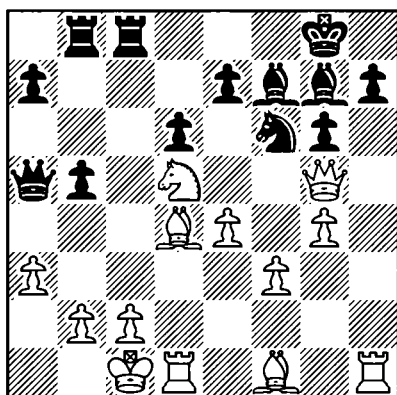
Other moves are bad: for example, 16...Qc7 17 e5 dxe5 18 Bxe5 is winning for White because of the familiar trick 18...Qc5 19 Bxf6 Bxf6 20 Rd8+!. Another typical mistake is 16...Bc4? 17 Bxc4+ Rxc4 18 Nd5 when White was winning easily in T.Sammalvuo-E.Forsaa, Copenhagen 2004.

### 17 Nd5! (Diagram 10)

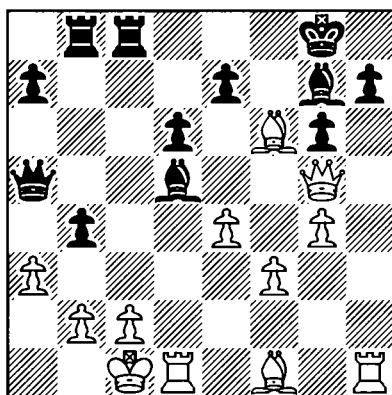
This is the best try. Black's position will become very dangerous, but I think he can survive.

### 17...Bxd5 18 Bxf6

White heads for a position with bishops of opposite colour, confident that Black's rickety king position combined with the open h-file will give him the better attacking chances.



**Diagram 10 (B)**



**Diagram 11 (W)**

#### **18...Bxf6?**

After this obvious move Black's position become very difficult. It was necessary to find a creative solution. The alternatives:

a) 18...Bb3? loses after 19 Bxg7 Bxc2 (or 19...Rxc2+ 20 Kb1) 20 Bc4+! Rxc4 21 Qd5+ Kxg7 22 Rxh7+! Kxh7 23 Qf7+ Kh6 24 g5+ Kxg5 25 Rg1+ and 1-0 in G.Lagumina-S.Lagrotteria, Porto San Giorgio 1992.

b) 18...Bxe4 has been recommended as an improvement, but I think White can get a large advantage here as well after 19 fxe4 Bxf6 20 Qd5+ Kg7 21 e5! (this is the same idea that we will see in the main game; instead 21 Bd3 Rf8 22 g5 Be5 23 Qe6 Qc7 24 Qh3 h5 25 gxh6+ Kh7 was no so clear in A.Toth-Pham Minh Hoang Budapest 1998) 21...Bg5+ (21...dxe5 fails to 22 Rxh7+ Kxh7 23 Qf7+ Kh6 24 Bd3 with a winning attack) 22 Kb1 and with a better structure and the safer king, White clearly has the upper hand.

c) 18...b4! (**Diagram 11**) is the solution.



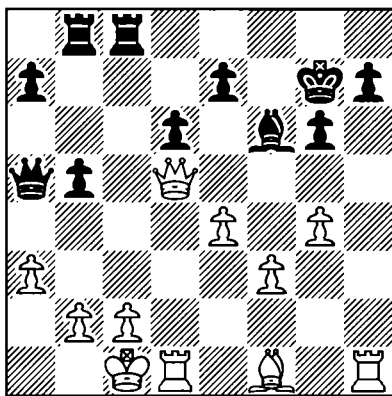
**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** Only with this move can Black justify 15...fxg6!?. In the game Black loses quickly and previously recommended improvements also look unsatisfactory. However, with 18...b4! Black is okay.

After 18...b4! White can try:

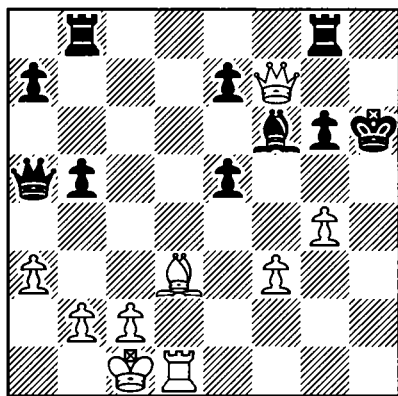
c1) 19 Bxg7 Rxc2+! 20 Kxc2 (not 20 Kb1? Ba2+) 20...Bxe4+ 21 fxe4 Qxg5 22 Bd4 Rc8+ 23 Kb3 e5! is not so clear, but with a much safer king Black should be better.

c2) 19 Rxd5 exf6 (but not 19...Qa4 20 Rd2 Bxf6 21 Qd5+ Kg7 22 Rxh7+!) 20 Qd2 (or 20 Rxa5 fxe5 with a likely draw) 20...Qa4 21 Rd4 Qb3! when Black threatens ...Qa2, as well as ...Qxf3, and ...f5 is in the air. The position is unclear.

**19 Qxd5+ Kg7? (Diagram 12)**



**Diagram 12 (W)**



**Diagram 13 (W)**

Instead 19...Kh8 loses after 20 Qf7, because 20...Bxb2+! can be met with 21 Kb1. A better try is 19...Kf8, but the precise 20 Bd3! (instead 20 Rxh7 Bxb2+! works, because 21 Kxb2 Qc3+ is a draw and 21 Kb1? Bg7 would even win for Black) 20...Rc5 21 Qa2! b4 22 Qb3! favours White.

**20 e5!**

White sacrifices a pawn to break through on the light squares.

**20...dxe5**

White can also meet 20...Bxe5 with 21 Rxh7+!, since 21...Kxh7 22 Qf7+ Kh6 (if 22...Bg7 23 Bd3) 23 g5+! Kh5 (23...Kxg5 24 Bd3) 24 Qh7+ Kxg5 25 Bd3 gives him a winning attack. If 25...Bxb2+ 26 Kxb2 Qc3+ 27 Kb1 leaves Black's king defenceless.

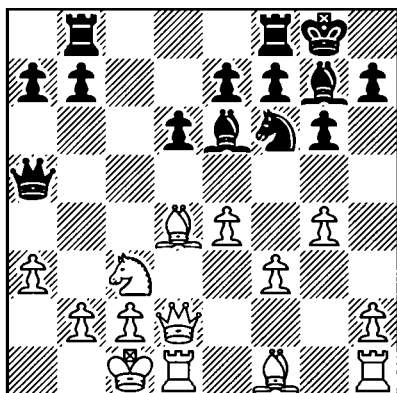
**21 Rxh7+! Kxh7 22 Qf7+ Kh6 23 Bd3 Rg8 (Diagram 13) 24 f4!**

This takes the f4-square away from the black king and leads to a forced mate.

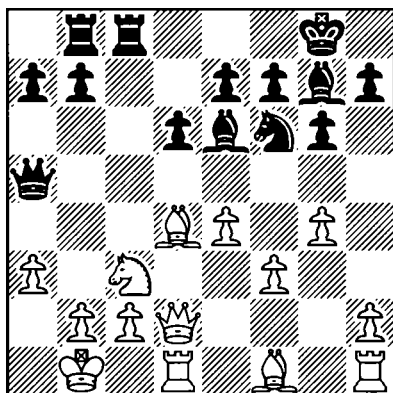
**23...exf4 25 g5+ Kxg5 26 Rg1+ Kh6 27 Rxe6+ 1-0**

**Game 44**  
**B.Jobava-Le Quang Liem**  
**Moscow 2008**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 O-O 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 g4 Be6 10 O-O-O Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Qa5 12 a3 Rab8 (Diagram 14)**



**Diagram 14 (W)**



**Diagram 15 (W)**

This little refinement prepares a quick ...b5 and essentially forces White to take play into a rather balanced endgame.

**13 Kb1**

Alternatives are not dangerous:

a) 13 Nd5 is poorly timed: 13...Qxd2+ 14 Rxd2 Bxd5 and now 15 exd5? (better is 15 Bxf6, seeking equality) loses the exchange to 15...Bh6.

b) 13 g5 Nh5 14 Bxg7 Nxg7 (or 14...Kxg7) is level.

c) 13 h4 is the most popular move. Then 13...Rfc8 transposes to the previous game, while 13...b5 threatens ...b4 and thus forces 14 Nd5. After 14...Qxd2+ 15 Rxd2 Bxd5 (15...Nxd5 16 exd5 Bxd4 17 Rxd4 Bd7 18 Bd3 is a little better for White) 16 exd5 Black is fine and has scored well with all of 16...a5, 16...Rfc8, and 16...Rb7.

**13...Rfc8 (Diagram 15)**

Having induced White to spend a tempo on Kb1, Black now plays this move. It is not possible to play 13...b5? because of 14 Nd5.

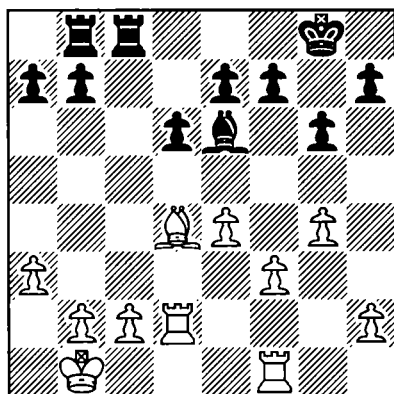
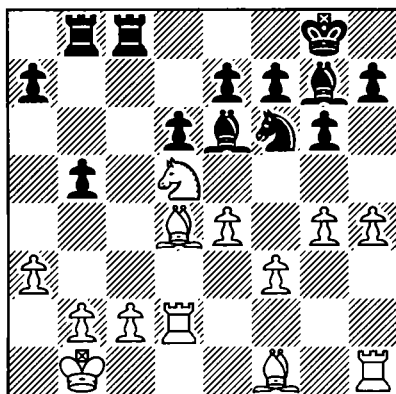
**14 h4**

Here we have the same position as we do in the note to White's 14th move in Game 39, except here it is Black to move. And if we compare the position to that of Game 40, here White has played g4 instead of h4-h5xg6! This difference in tempi means that Black's attack is stronger, so White must head for the endgame. The alternatives to 14 h4 are also pretty harmless:

a) 14 Bxf6 Bxf6 15 Nd5 Qxd2 16 Nxf6+ Kg7! is fine for Black.

b) 14 g5 Nh5 15 Nd5 Qxd2 16 Rxd2 Bxd5 17 exd5 Bxd4 18 Rxd4 has occurred frequently. The endgame gives equal chances, but it is still unbalanced. Black could try 18...f6!?

c) 14 Nd5 immediately bails out: 14...Qxd2 15 Rxd2 (or 15 Nxf6+ Bxf6 16 Rxd2 Bxd4 17 Rxd4 Rc5) 15...Nxd5 (after 15...Bxd5 16 exd5 Black will have to spend a tempo defending his a-pawn) 16 Bxg7 (not 16 exd5? Bxd5! 17 Bxg7 Bxf3 when White cannot play Rh3) 16...Ne3 (16...Kxg7 17 exd5 Bd7 looks safer to me) was agreed drawn in V.Anand-G.Kasparov, World Championship (Game 15), New York 1995. After 17 Bd4 Nxf1 18 Rxf1 (**Diagram 16**) perhaps Black should not experience too much trouble, but he should not relax just yet because White can try to play g5 and h4-h5 with kingside pressure.

**Diagram 16 (B)****Diagram 17 (B)****14...b5 15 Nd5**

This is now necessary, because Black is much faster after 15 h5 b4.

**15...Qxd2 16 Rxd2 (Diagram 17)**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Instead 16 Nxf6+ Bxf6 17 Rxd2 Bxd4 18 Rxd4 a5 is fine for Black.

### 16...Bxd5

Or 16...Nxd5 and then:

a) 17 Bxg7 Ne3 (17...Kxg7 18 exd5 Bd7 is the alternative) 18 Bd4 Nxf1 19 Rxf1 a5 is another version of the opposite-coloured bishop ending that could have arisen in Anand-Kasparov above. Here Black has already begun his queenside counterplay, so 20 e5 was accompanied by a draw offer in J.Polgar-V.Anand, Dortmund 1997.

b) 17 exd5 Bxd5! 18 Bxg7 Bxf3 19 Rh3 Bxg4 20 Rg3 Kxg7 21 Rxg4 Rc5 was I.Nyzhnyk-D.Reinderman, Groningen 2009. This is a typical ending with bishop against three pawns. Black has good counterchances.

### 17 exd5 a5 (Diagram 18)

Also possible is 17...Rc7, but the text is more active.

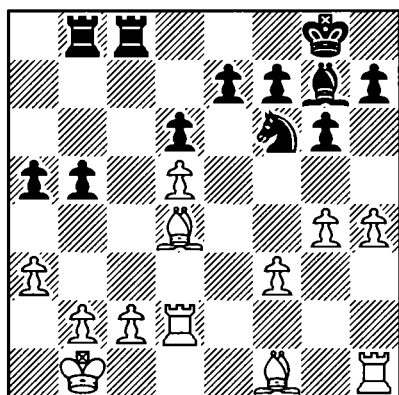


Diagram 18 (W)

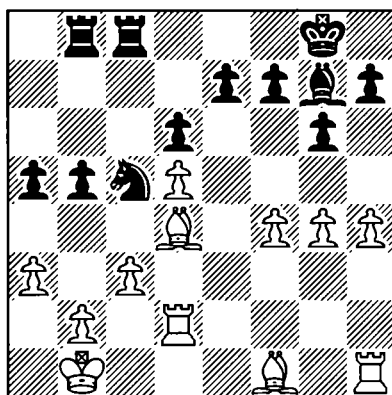


Diagram 19 (W)

### 18 c3

This gives Black something more to latch on to on the queenside. Instead 18 h5 would be met with 18...Nd7 or 18...b4. White can also try 18 g5 Nh5 19 Bxg7 Kxg7 20 Bh3, but then 20...Rc4! 21 Bg4 was E.Sharapov-M.Hartikainen, Cracow 2010, and now 21...Nf4 22 Re1 f5!? 23 gxf6+ Kxf6 looks nice for Black.

### 18...Nd7 19 f4 Nc5 (Diagram 19)

Black has good counterplay on the queenside.

### 20 Bxg7

After this move Black's knight will be a nuisance to White. Instead 20 Bxc5 Rxc5 21 h5 holds the balance, because 21...b4 can be met by 22 cxb4 axb4 23 a4 when White is certainly not worse.

**20...Kxg7 21 h5 b4 22 cxb4?!**

This fuels Black's initiative and compels White to give up a pawn. Instead 22 axb4 axb4 23 c4 was a better try.

**22...axb4 23 a4**

White has problems with both b2 and his kingside pawns after 23 axb4 Rxb4.

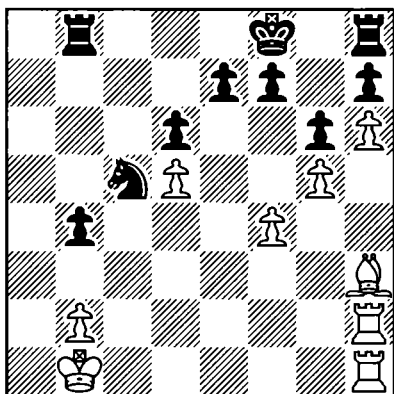
**23...Nxa4 24 Rdh2 Rh8**

Black allows his rook to be locked out of play, but the inconvenience is temporary.

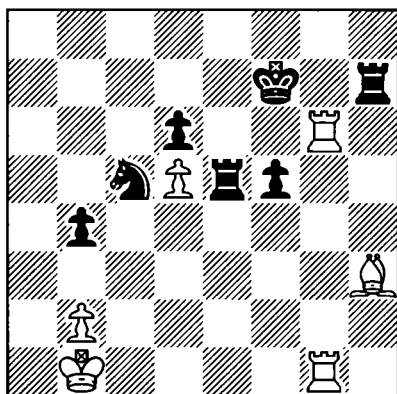
**25 h6+**

White should probably resist this temptation and play something like 25 Re2.

**25...Kf8 26 g5 Nc5 27 Bh3 (Diagram 20)**



**Diagram 20 (B)**



**Diagram 21 (W)**

**27...f5!**

Black makes some room for his king and locks out the h3-bishop. White is compelled to capture en passant, but then his pawns become weak.

**28 gxf6 exf6 29 f5**

White cannot contain the black king: for example, 29 Re1 f5! 30 Rhe2 b3! (30...Kf7 31 Re7 Nd3 32 R1e3 Rc8! and Black wins more material.

**29...Kf7**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Black could play 29...g5 30 Bg4 Ke7, but he is not afraid of White's pieces.

**30 Rf1 Rhe8 31 fxg6+ hxg6 32 Rhf2 f5 33 Rg2 Re5 34 Rfg1 Rg8 35 h7 Rh8 36 Rxc6 Rxh7 (Diagram 21)**

The h3-bishop is left without a good square. Because 37 Bf1 fails to 37...Re1+ 38 Kc2 Rxf1, White gives up the piece for a couple of pawns.

**37 Bxf5 Rxf5 38 Rxd6 Rh2**

Black is able to mop up with little trouble as White's king is a target.

**39 Rc6 Nd3 40 Rc2 Rff2 41 Rxf2+ Rxf2 42 d6 Ke6 43 Ka1 Rd2 44 Rg6+ Kd7 45 b3 Nc5 46 Kb1 Rd3 0-1**

### Game 45

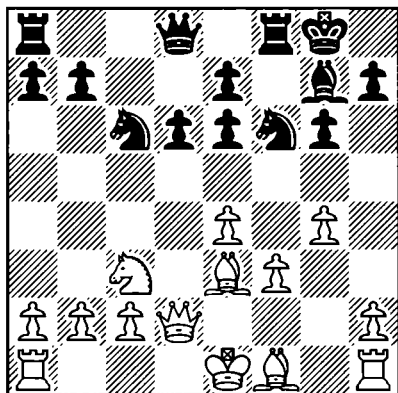
**R.Ponomarev-T.Radjabov**

**Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010**

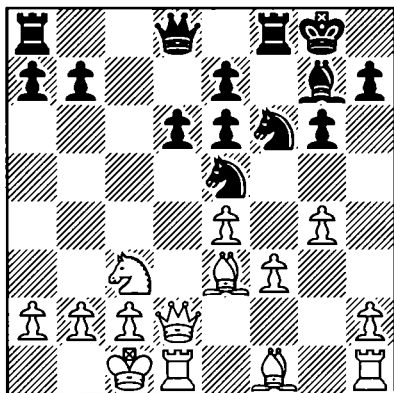
**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 g4 Be6 10 Nxe6**

White radically alters the pawn structure.

**10...fxe6 (Diagram 22)**



**Diagram 22 (W)**



**Diagram 23 (W)**

Although Black has strengthened his control of d5 and opened the f-file for his rook, White can still fight for an advantage. Black's doubled pawns are not invulnerable and White does have the bishop pair.



**11 0-0-0**

This is the main move. Instead 11 Bc4 seems more natural at first, but it is probably better to hold this move in reserve. The immediate attack on the e6-pawn is not so troubling for Black and the c4-bishop can be vulnerable to ...Ne5, which would also attack the f3-pawn. Black has:

a) 11...d5!? 12 exd5 Ne5 13 Be2 Nxd5 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 0-0-0 e6 16 f4 Nc6 17 Rhf1 was Z.Varga-G.Pirisi, Hungarian League 1992. I suspect White should be better here, but Black can improve earlier with 12...Na5 13 Be2 Nxd5 14 Nxd5 exd5 15 0-0-0 e6 when the knight cannot be booted back to c6 and Black intends ...Rc8 and ...Nc4 with counterplay.

b) 11...Qc8 12 Bb3 (not 12 0-0-0?! Ne5) 12...Na5 (now 12...Ne5 would be met by 13 Qe2) 13 0-0-0 Nxb3+ and now:

b1) 14 cxb3 Nd7 15 Rhf1 Bxc3!? 16 bxc3 Ne5 17 Bf4 and now rather than the 17...Qc5 18 Bxe5 Qxe5 19 f4! of Z.Varga-M.Golubev, Baile Tusnad 1997, Black could have played 17...Nd3+ 18 Qxd3 Rxf4 with equality or 17...Rxf4!? 18 Qxf4 Qxc3+ 19 Kb1 Rf8 with good compensation for the exchange.

b2) 14 axb3 Nd7 15 Rdf1 (instead 15 Rhf1 Bxc3! 16 bxc3 a5 gives Black the faster attack because White's rook has moved from the h-file) was Y.Zinchenko-A.Tukhaev, Evpatoria 2006. Now 15...Bxc3 16 bxc3 Ne5 (16...a5 17 h4!) with the idea of 17 Bf4!? Rxf4 18 Qxf4 Qxc3 19 Kb1 Rf8 looks promising for Black.

**11...Ne5 (Diagram 23)**

Black hits the f3-pawn and prevents Bc4. Alternatives:

a) 11...Qc8?! is inaccurate. Then 12 h4 Ne5 13 Be2 transposes to note 'b2' to Black's 12th move (this was the actual move order of Cornette-Delgado), but White could instead go for the throat with 13 h5! (Jones) with a strong attack.

b) 11...Ne8!? 12 f4 Qa5 13 Bc4 Nc7 is an interesting plan. Then 14 Nb5 was seen in V.Ivanchuk-W.Moranda, Warsaw (rapid) 2010, where 14...Qa4! 15 Nxc7 Qxc4 would have given Black good counterplay. Instead 14 h4 Rad8!? 15 h5 Bxc3 16 Qxc3 Qxc3 17 bxc3 d5 is unclear, but White could consider the prophylactic 14 Bb3!?

c) 11...Rc8 has been played at a high level. After 12 Bc4 (instead 12 h4 Ne5 13 Be2 transposes to the note to White's 13th move, below) 12...Qd7 13 Bb3 Na5 14 h4 Nc4 (alternatives are 14...Nxb3+ and 14...Ne8) 15 Qd3!? (15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 h5 looks promising for White) and now 15...Qc6 16 Ne2 Nd7 gave both sides chances in N.Short-L.McShane, London 2010. Instead 15...Nxe3!? 16 Qxe3 with the idea of e4-e5 was bad, but 15...Nxb2!? 16 Kxb2 Nd5! 17 exd5 Rxc3 18 Qxc3 Bxc3+ 19 Kxc3 Rxf3 would be very unclear.

## 12 Be2 Rc8

Alternatives:

a) 12...Qa5 13 Kb1 (both 13 g5 Ne8 and 13 h4 b5 look satisfactory for Black)  
13...Rac8 14 Nb5 Qxd2 15 Bxd2 Nfd7 16 Nd4 Kf7 17 Bc1 and now 17...Nc6? allowed  
18 Nxe6 Kxe6 19 Bc4+ with an overwhelming position in C.Monsieux-D.Vocaturro,  
Belfort 2005, but 17...Nc5 would give Black a playable position.

b) 12...Qc8 13 h4! (Black has sufficient counterchances after 13 Bh6 Bxh6 14 Qxh6  
Qc5 or 13 Kb1 Nc4 14 Bxc4 Qxc4) and then:

b1) 13...Nc4 14 Bxc4 Qxc4 15 Bh6 (instead 15 h5 Nd7 16 hxg6 hxg6 with ideas like  
...Rxf3 and ...Bxc3 gives Black counterplay) 15...b5 16 Bxg7 Kxg7 17 Kb1 should give  
White somewhat the better prospects.

b2) 13...Nfd7 14 f4 (14 h5 Nc4 15 Bxc4 Qxc4 is 15 h5 in the last variation) 14...Nc4  
15 Bxc4 Qxc4 16 e5! Rad8 and now 17 Qd3 Nb6 is level, while 17 exd6 exd6 18 h5  
Bxc3! 19 Qxc3 (19 bxc3 Qxa2) 19...Qxc3 20 bxc3 Nf6 gave Black a defensible posi-  
tion in M.Cornette-H.Delgado Ramos, Montcada i Reixac 2011. More dangerous is  
Jones's suggestion 17 h5! with the idea 17...dxe5 18 hxg6 hxg6 19 f5! (rather than  
19 Qh2 Nf6!) when White is able to open lines towards Black's king.

## 13 Nb5!? (Diagram 24)

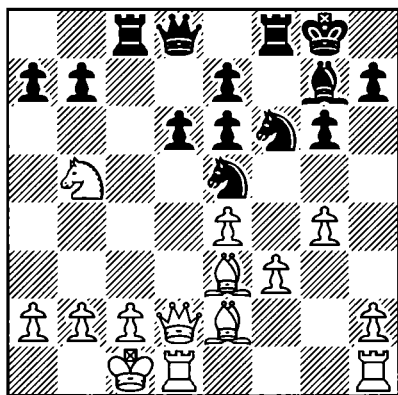


Diagram 24 (B)

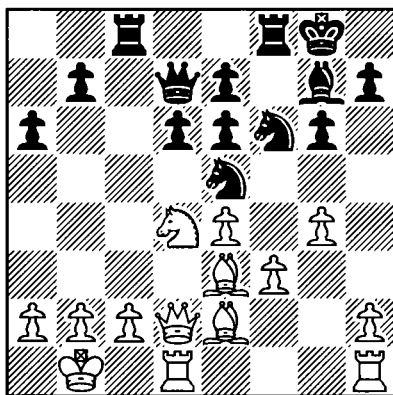


Diagram 25 (B)



**KEY DEVELOPMENT:** This lunge is actually not new, but it is more dangerous than was previously thought. White hits the a7-pawn and prepares Nd4, attacking e6. If Black defends the pawn with ...Qd7, he will not have the manoeuvre ...Nfd7 available.

The alternative is the more straightforward 13 h4 Qa5 14 h5. This has been seen less frequently and does not score as well, but it is dangerous as well. Then 14...Rxc3 15 Qxc3 Qxa2 does not really work, as 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 Qa3 is good enough for a plus in the endgame, while the more ambitious 17 Qb4 and 17 Qc7 are possible too. Instead 14...b5 15 a3! (this is better than 15 hxg6 b4!) and if 15...b4 16 Na2! is strong, so Black's best is probably 14...Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 hxg6 hxg6 17 Bh6 Rfc8 18 Bxg7 Kxg7 19 Qh6+ Kf7, although 20 Rd3! should give White some advantage.

### 13...a6

This straightforward move is probably best. Alternatives:

a) 13...Nc4 is the only move considered by Dearing. Black ends up in difficulties after 14 Bxc4 Rxc4 15 Qd3! (instead 15 Nd4 Qd7 is variation 'c2' below) 15...Rc8 16 Qb3 Qd7 and now both 17 Nxa7 and 17 Nd4 give White the upper hand.

b) 13...Nfd7 is the move Black would like to play. Then 14 Nxa7?! Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rc4 would leave the f2-pawn hanging while ...Ra4 is also a threat. Therefore in practice White has avoided the pawn snatch:

b1) 14 f4 Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 e5! Nb6 17 Qd3 Qd7 18 Nxa7 Nd5 19 Qxc4 Nxe3 20 Qd4 Nxd1 21 Rxd1 gave White some advantage in D.Navara-M.Leon Hoyos, Khanty-Mansiysk Olympiad 2010, although the position is still messy.

b2) 14 Nd4! Nc5 15 f4 (the real test is 15 b4 Qb6 16 bxc5 dxc5 17 Nb3 Nxf3 18 Bxf3 Rxf3 19 Qd7!) 15...Nc6 (instead 15...Nxe4 looks okay, because 16 Qe1 Qc7! 17 c3 Nd7 18 Nxe6 Bxc3! works out for Black) 16 Nxe6 Nxe6 17 Bc4 Ncd4 18 Qxd4!? Bxd4 19 Bxe6+ Rf7 20 Bxd4 gave White good compensation for the queen in A.Fernandez Cardoso-P.Morales Romero, Havana 2010.

c) 13...Qd7!? is the most popular move. White has:

c1) 14 Nxa7 Ra8 15 Kb1 b5?! (better would be 15...b6 16 Nb5 Nxf3 17 Bxf3 Qxb5 18 e5 and now Black can play 18...Nxg4!? 19 Bxg4 Qc4 or 18...Nd5 19 Bxd5 exd5 20 Qxd5+ Qxd5 21 Rxd5 Bxe5 22 Rb5 Bf4 with the idea 23 Bxb6 Bxh2) 16 g5 Nh5 17 Nxb5 Nxf3 18 Qb4 was much better for White in F.Vallejo Pons-S.Azarov, Dresden Olympiad 2008.

c2) 14 Nd4 Nc4 15 Bxc4 Rxc4 16 Kb1 Rfc8 (Black faced similar problems after 16...b5 17 h4 b4 18 h5 Rfc8 19 hxg6 hxg6 20 Rc1 a5 21 b3 R4c7 22 Bh6 Bh8 23 Qg5 Kf7 24 Qxa5 in B.Benko-G.Calzolari, correspondence 2002) 17 c3 scores well for White: 17...b5 18 Rc1 a5 19 h4 b4 (Jones suggests 19...Qb7) 20 cxb4 Rxb4 21 a3 Rbc4 22 Rxc4 Rxc4 23 Qxa5 and Black had nothing to show for the pawn in F.Vallejo Pons-P.Carlsson, Gibraltar 2010.

**14 Nd4 Qd7 15 Kb1 (Diagram 25)**

White could also consider 15 h4!?. Black cannot coordinate his pieces with ...Nfd7, so he will have to find another means to create counterplay.

**15...d5!?**

Instead 15...Nc4 16 Bxc4 Rxc4 17 h4 e5 (17...Rfc8 18 c3 would be similar to variation 'c2' above) 18 Ne2 (18 Nb3!?) 18...Qe6 19 h5 was good for White in A.Fedorov-E.Kanter, St Petersburg 2010. Black could consider 15...b5!? with the idea 16 h4 Nc4 17 Bxc4 bxc4. After 18 c3 e5 19 Nc2 Qb7 White may still be better, but this position is rather complicated.

**16 g5**

There is not time for h4-h5 now, so White plays to shut out Black's kingside pieces.

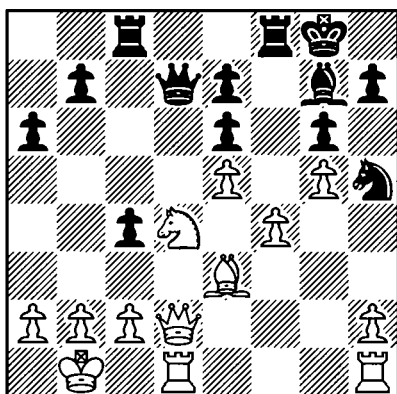
**16...Nh5 17 f4 Nc4**

Worse is 17...Nc6 18 e5 Nxd4 19 Qxd4 when Black was horribly passive in N.Nestorovic-M.Milenkovic, Srbija 2010.

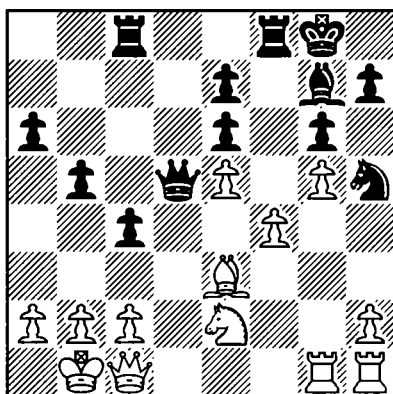
**18 Bxc4 dxc4**

Capturing this way allows Black to activate his queen. Worse is 18...Rxc4 19 e5.

**19 e5 (Diagram 26)**



**Diagram 26 (B)**



**Diagram 27 (W)**

This is a typical plan for White. The g7-bishop is locked out of play, so Black must use his better control of the light squares to create counterplay.

**19...Qd5**

Black immediately centralizes his queen. Also possible was 19...c3!? 20 bxc3 Rc4 with counterplay.

## 20 Ne2

With this move White covers the c3-square and introduces the possibility of Ng3. A sharper and more promising approach was 20 Qb4!, with ideas like Nf5 or Qb6 attacking the e6-pawn. After 20...Rcd8 (Black cannot play 20...b5? 21 Nf5 or 20...Nxf4? 21 Bxf4 Rxf4 22 Ne2) 21 Rhf1! Qe4 (21...b5 allows 22 Qxe7) 22 Nxe6 Rxd1+ 23 Rxd1 Qxe3 24 Nxf8 Bxf8 25 Qxc4+ Kg7 26 Rf1 Qh3 27 a4 White has good chances according to Jones.

## 20...Qg2!?

The black queen tries to make a nuisance of herself. Also possible was 20...Rcd8 21 Qc1 Qe4.

## 21 Rdg1

Instead 21 Rhe1!? Qxh2?! 22 Qd7 Qh3 23 Nd4 is strong, because 23...Nxf4? loses to 24 Bxf4 when Black cannot recapture because the c8-rook is hanging. Thus Black should play 21...Rcd8! 22 Qxd8 (22 Qc1 Qxh2) 22...Rxd8 23 Rxd8+ Kf7 with an unclear position.

## 21...Qd5 22 Qc1 b5 (Diagram 27)

Black's bishop is still buried, but his heavy pieces are active and he has gained some space.

## 23 Ng3 b4 24 Rd1 Qb7 25 Nxb5 gxh5 26 Qd2 Rcd8 27 Qe2

Instead 27 Qxd8 Rxd8 28 Rxd8+ Kf7 is not clear, as the queen is very active.

## 27...Qe4 28 Rhe1 b3 29 Rd2 Rd5 30 Ka1 Rfd8 31 Rxd5 Qxd5

Black would like to play 31...exd5 in order to free his bishop with ...e6, but after 32 cxb3 cxb3 33 axb3 White has an extra pawn.

## 32 cxb3 cxb3 33 Rc1 (Diagram 28)

## 33...h4

Instead 33...bxa2 would allow 34 Qxa6, but 33...Qd3! would have forced White to tread carefully. After 34 Qxd3 (34 Qf2 bxa2) 34...Rxd3 35 Rc3 (Black's king would become very active after 35 Re1 Kf7) 35...Rd1+ 36 Rc1 (worse is 36 Bc1 h6!) 36...Rd3 he should make a draw, however.

## 34 Qc4

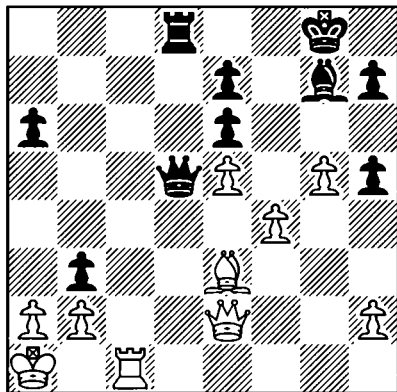
Here White could have ventured 34 Qg4!.

## 34...bxa2

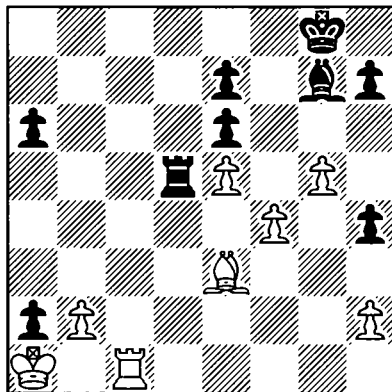
## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

Black could also try 34...Qxc4 35 Rxc4 Rd1+ 36 Rc1 Rxc1+ 37 Bxc1 Kf7!.

**35 Qxd5 Rxd5 (Diagram 29)**



**Diagram 28 (B)**



**Diagram 29 (W)**

This keeps the rook active. Instead 35...exd5 36 Kxa2 would favour White, as Black's pawns are the more vulnerable.

**36 h3 Kf7 37 Kxa2 h6 38 Rg1 ½-½**

Black could certainly play on here, as his bishop is finally breaking out and his rook and king are active.

## Conclusion

9 g4 is still a good alternative to the main lines, even if it should not be so threatening theoretically. The lines with 9...Be6 10 O-O-O Nxd4 are fine for Black, but White has found some new ideas here with 10 Nxe6. Many of these positions are more dangerous for Black than was previously believed and we can expect more developments in these lines in the future.

# Index of Variations

## Soltis Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 h4 h5 (Diagram)

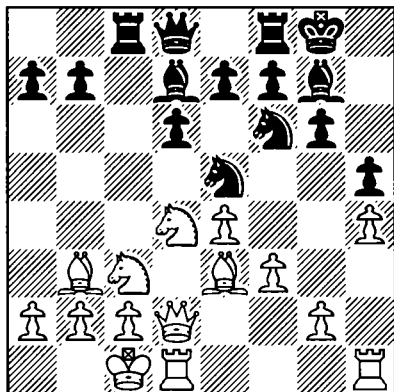


Diagram (W)

### 13 Bg5

13 g4 – 10

13 Kb1 – 13

13 Bh6 – 17

### 13...Rc5 14 Kb1

14 g4 hxg4

15 h5 – 21

## *Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

15 f4 Nc4

16 Qd3 – 28

16 Qe2 – 32

**14...b5**

14...Re8 15 g4 hxg4

16 h5 – 50

16 f4 – 54

**15 g4 a5**

15...hxg4 – 38

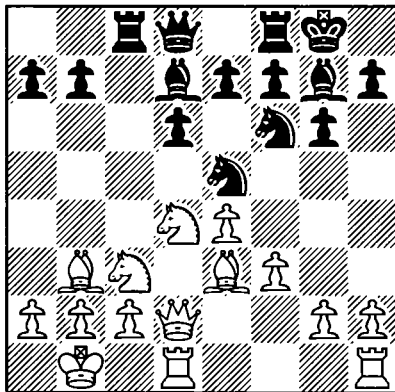
**16 gxh5**

16...a4 – 41

16...Nxh5 – 45

## **Modern Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Ne5 12 Kb1 (Diagram)**



**Diagram (B)**

**12...Re8**

12...Nc4 – 59



12...a6 – 80

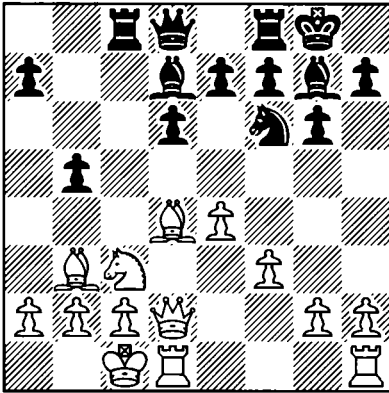
**13 h4 h5**

14 Bh6 – 67

14 g4 – 73

## **Topalov Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rc8 11 Bb3 Nxd4 12 Bxd4 b5 (Diagram)**



**Diagram (W)**

**13 Nd5**

13 Bxa7 – 90

13 h4 – 94

**13...Nxd5 14 Bxg7 Kxg7 15 exd5 a5 16 a3**

16...b4 – 99

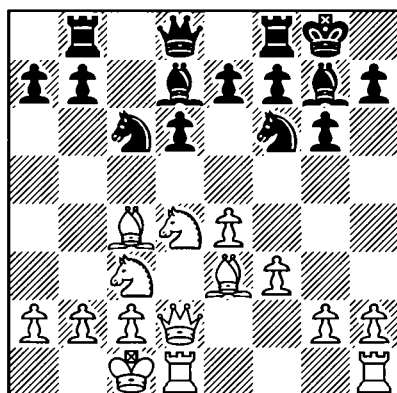
16...Kg8 – 109

## **Chinese Variation: 10 0-0-0 Rb8 11 Bb3 Ne5**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4**

*Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon*

**Bd7 10 0-0-0 Rb8 (Diagram)**



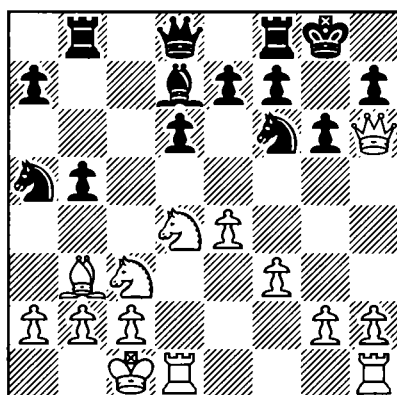
**Diagram (W)**

**11 Bb3 Na5 12 Bh6**

12 Kb1 – 117

12 h4 – 124

**12...Bxh6 13 Qxh6 b5 (Diagram)**



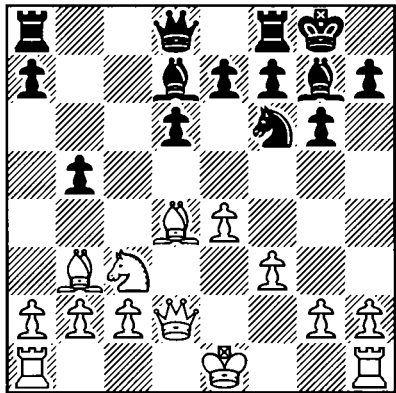
**Diagram (W)**

14 h4 – 128

14 g4 – 135

**Accelerated Variation: 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 Bc4 Bd7 10 Bb3 Nxd4 11 Bxd4 b5 (Diagram)**

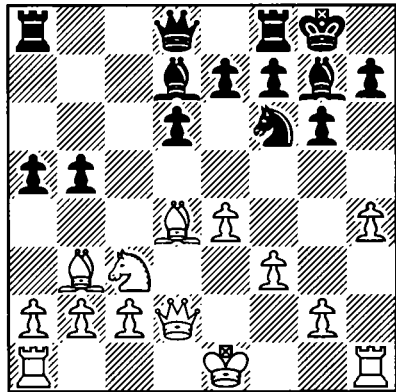


**Diagram (W)**

**12 h4**

12 a4 – 142

**12...a5 (Diagram)**



**Diagram (W)**

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

13 a4 – 149

13 h5 – 157

### 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 exd5 Nxd5 11 Nxc6 bxc6 (Diagram)

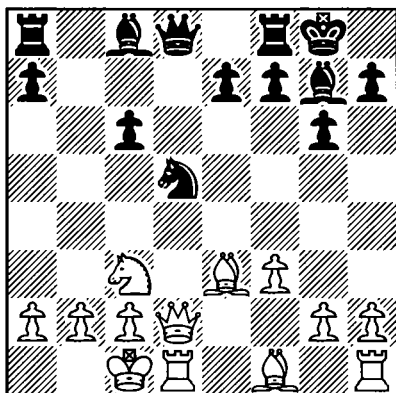


Diagram (W)

### 12 Bd4

12 Nxd5 – 168

### 12...Nxc3

12...e5 – 174

12...Bxd4 – 183

### 13 Qxc3 Bh6+ 14 Be3 Bxe3+ 15 Qxe3 Qb6 16 Qxe7 Be6

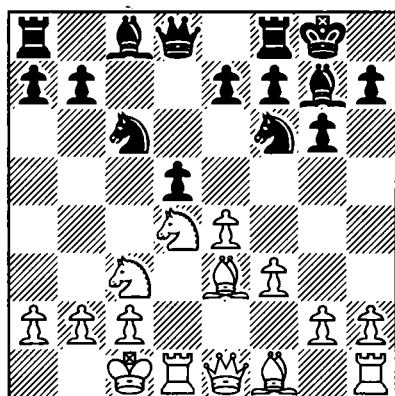
17 Bd3 – 193

17 Qa3 – 198

### 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9

**0-0-0 d5 10 Qe1 (Diagram)**

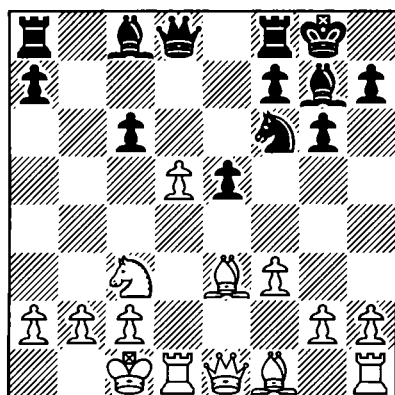


**Diagram (B)**

**10...e5**

10...e6 – 207

**11 Nxc6 bxc6 12 exd5 (Diagram)**



**Diagram (B)**

12...Nxd5 – 212

12...cxd5 – 219

9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 d5 10 Kb1 (Diagram)

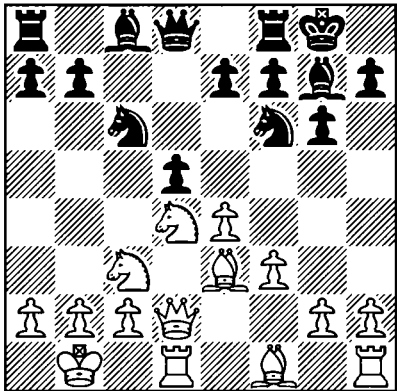


Diagram (B)

10...Nxd4

10...Rb8 – 247

11 e5 Nf5 12 exf6 (Diagram)

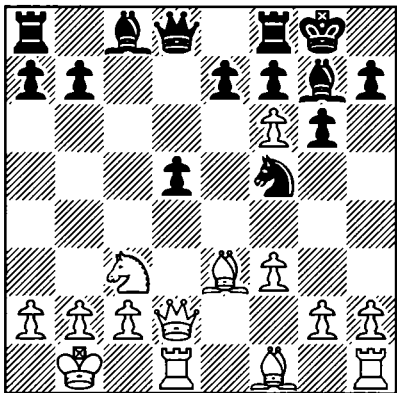


Diagram (B)

**12...exf6**

12...Bxf6 – 226

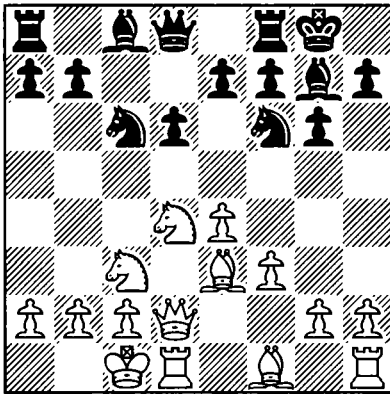
**13 Bc5 d4 14 Bxf8 Qxf8 15 Nb5 Ne3**

16 Re1 – 236

16 Rc1 – 242

**9 0-0-0 Nxd4 and 9...Bd7**

**1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 0-0-0 (Diagram)**



**Diagram (B)**

**9...Nxd4**

9...Bd7 10 g4 Rc8 11 h4 Ne5 12 h5 Qa5

13 Kb1 – 272

13 Be2 – 281

**10 Bxd4 Be6 11 Kb1 Qc7 12 h4 Rfc8**

13 g4 – 256

13 h5 – 263

## Chess Developments: The Sicilian Dragon

### 9 g4

1 e4 c5 2 Nf3 d6 3 d4 cxd4 4 Nxd4 Nf6 5 Nc3 g6 6 Be3 Bg7 7 f3 0-0 8 Qd2 Nc6 9 g4  
(Diagram)

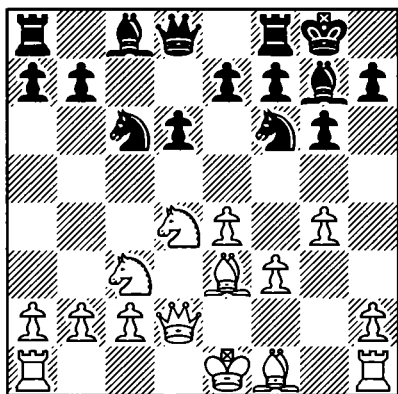


Diagram (B)

9...Be6 10 0-0-0

10 Nxe6 – 302

10...Nxd4 11 Bxd4 Qa5 12 a3

12...Rfc8 – 289

12...Rab8 – 298



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## the Sicilian Dragon

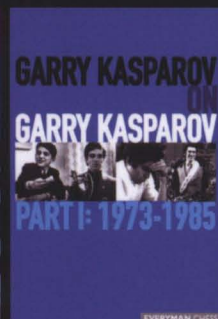
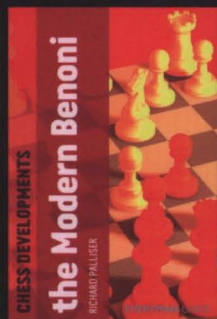
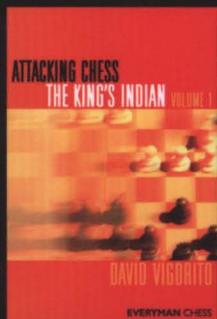
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